

S E R M O N S

Preached upon

Several Occasions.

By *ROBERT SOUTH, D. D.*
Late PREBENDARY of *Westminster*, and
CANON of *Christ-Church, Oxon.*

Now first Published from the

AUTHOR'S MANUSCRIPTS.

V O L. IX.

L O N D O N:

Printed for CHARLES BATHURST, opposite
St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet-street.

M.DCC.XLIV.

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THE
Chief HEADS
OF THE
SERMONS *in* VOL. IX.

S E R M O N I.

PROV. xiv. 18. *latter Part. But a wounded Spirit who can bear !*

Few Men being kept from Sin, but merely by the check of their Fears, representing to them the endless insupportable Torments of another World, as the certain, consequent, and terrible Reward of it : Atheists, who shake these Fears off, are admonished, that God can antedate the Torments they disbelieve ; and, by what he can make them *feel*, teach them the Certainty of what they refuse to *fear*, 1 to 2.

By way of Explanation of the Words is premis'd, 1. That by *Spirit*, is meant the Soul, in which there is a lower or inferior Part, the *Sensitive Faculties* and Appetites ; and a more noble Portion, purely *intellectual*, in Operation, as well as in Substance, perfectly *spiritual*.—2. By being *wounded* is to be understood, its being deeply and intimately possess'd with a lively Sense of God's Wrath for Sin, 3 to 5.

The Sense of the Words then lies full and clear in this one Proposition, *viz.* That the Trouble and Anguish of a Soul, labouring under a Sense of God's Displeasure for Sin, is intexpressibly greater than any other Grief or Trouble whatsoever, 5. which is prosecuted under the following Particulars: Shewing,

I. What Kind of Persons are the proper Subjects of this Trouble, *viz.* both the Righteous and the Wicked, but with a very different Issue, 5 to 7.

II. Wherein the excessive Greatness of this Trouble doth appear; which may be collected, 1st, From the Behaviour of our Saviour himself in this Condition, 8 to 10.—2^{dly}, From those raised and passionate Expressions, that have been uttered by Persons eminent in the Ways of God, while they were labouring under it, 11 to 15.—3^{dly}, From the uninterrupted incessant Continuance of it, 15 to 17.—4^{thly}, From its violent, and more than ordinary Manifestation of itself, on outward Signs and Effects, 17 to 19.—5^{thly}, From those horrid Effects it has had upon Persons, not upheld under it by Divine Grace, 20 to 21.

III. By what Ways and Means this Trouble is brought upon the Soul, four Ways instanced, 1st, By dreadful Reflections upon *Divine Justice*, as provok'd, 21 to 23.—2^{dly}, By fearful Apprehensions of the *Divine Mercy*, as abused, 23 to 25.—3^{dly}, By God's withdrawing his Presence, and the Sense of his Love from the Spirit, 25 to 27.—4^{thly}, By God's giving Commission to the *Tempter*, more than usually, to trouble and disquiet it, 27 to 30.

IV.

IV. What is God's End and Design in casting Men into such a perplex'd Condition, 30.—1st, For the *Wicked* or *Reprobate*, it is but the first Fruits of Hell, and the Earnest of their Damnation.—2^{dly}, For the *Pious* and *Sincere*, God designs it, 1st, To imbitter Sin to them, 30 to 32.—2^d, To endear and enhance the Value of returning Mercy, 32 to 34.

V. The Inferences to be drawn from the Whole are,

1. That no Man presume to pronounce any thing scoffingly of the present, or severely of the final Estate of such, as he finds exercis'd with the distracting Troubles of a wounded Spirit, 34 to 36.

2. Let no *secure Sinner* applaud himself in the presumed Safety of his spiritual Estate, because he finds no such Trouble upon his Spirit for Sin, 36, 37.

3. Let no Person exclude himself from the Number of such as are *sincere* and truly *regenerate*, only because he never yet felt any of these *amazing Pangs* of Conscience for Sin, 37, 38.

S E R M O N II.

PSALM xcv. 2. *Unto whom I swear in my Wrath, that they should not enter into my Rest.*

By this Expression, *I swear in my Wrath*, is meant God's peremptory declaring his Resolution to destroy the murmuring and rebellious *Jews*, 40. The Word *Swearing* is very significant, and seems to import,

1. The Certainty of the Sentence here pronounced.

2. The Terror of it; if the Children of *Israel* should say, *Let not God speak to us, lest we die*, 40. As for the Word *Rest*, we must admit in this Scripture, as well as in many others of the like nature, a double Interpretation; 1st, A *temporal Rest* in *Canaan* the promis'd Land, 41. 2dly, An *eternal Rest* in the heavenly *Canaan*, 42.

The Words thus explain'd, are drawn into one Proposition, *viz.* That God sometimes in this Life, upon extraordinary Provocations, may and does inevitably design and seal up obstinate Sinners to eternal Destruction, 43. The Prosecution is managed under these Particulars:

I. Shewing how, and by what means God seals up a Sinner to Perdition. There are three ways by which God usually does this:

1. By withholding the Virtue and Power of his Ordinances, 43 to 46.

2. By restraining the convincing Power of his Providences, 46. And there are three sorts of Providence instanced, in which God often speaks convincingly.---1st, In a general common Calamity, 47 to 49.---2dly, By particular, personal, and distinguishing Judgments, 50, 51.---3dly, By signal unexpected Deliverances, 52, 53.

3. By delivering up a Sinner to a Stupidity or Searedness of Conscience, 54 to 57.

II. Shewing what sort of obstinate Sinners those are that God deals with in this manner: Which are, 1st, Such as sin against clear and notable Warnings from God, 57 to 60.---2dly, Such as sin against special renew'd Vows and Promises of Obedience made to God, 60 to 62.

III. Answering and resolving two Questions that may arise from the foregoing Particulars:

1. Whether the Purpose of God passed upon an obstinate Sinner, (here expressed by *God's swearing against him*) be absolutely irrevocable? Concerning which it is affirmed that the Scripture is full and clear for it, 62 to 64.

2. Whether a Man may know such a Purpose to have passed upon him, antecedently to its Execution? In answer to which, from a Consideration of the ordinary ways, by which God imparts his Will to Men, namely, 1st, By his Word, 65 to 67. 2^{dly}, By Men's Collection of it from its Effects, 67. It is affirmed, that no Man in this Life can pass any certain Judgment concerning the Will of God in reference to his own final Estate, 68. But here is observed, a wide Difference between the *Purpose* of God hitherto discoursed of, and that which the Schools call *God's Decree of Reprobation*. 1st, Because that Decree is said to commence upon God's good Pleasure and Sovereign Will, but this Purpose upon the Provocation of the Sinner. 2^{dly}, Because that Decree is said to be from all Eternity; but this Purpose is taken up after some signal Provocation, 68, 69. from all which,

IV. We are exhorted to beware of sinning under Sin-aggravating Circumstances, 70 to 72. and shewn the Danger of dallying with and venturing upon the Almighty, by a daring Continuance in a Course of Sin, 72 to 74.

SERMON III.

PSALM XIV. I. first Part. *The Fool hath said in his Heart there is no God.*

In the Words we have two Particulars, wherein we may consider,

I. An Assertion made, *There is no God.*

1. The Thing asserted, which may be understood, *1st*, Of an absolute Removal of the Divine Being and Existence; or *2dly*, Of a Removal of God's Providence, by which he governs and takes Account of all the particular Affairs of the World, and more especially of the Lives and Actions of Men, 76.

2. The Manner of the Assertion, *The Fool bath said in his Heart*, it wears the Badge of Guilt, Privacy, and Darknes, 77, 78.

By the *Fool's saying in his Heart there is no God*, may be imply'd,

1. An inward Wishing that there was no God, 79, 80.

2. His seeking out Arguments to perswade himself that there is none, 80 to 83.

3. Not only a seeking for Reasons and Arguments, but also a marvellous Readiness to acquiesce in any seeming Probability or Appearance of Reason, that may make for his Opinion, 83, 84.

4. Another way, different from all the former, for a Man to place his sole Dependance, as to his chief Good and Happiness, on any thing besides God, is (as we may so speak) virtually and by consequence for him to *say in his Heart there is no God*, 85, 86.

II. The second Particular consider'd is, the Person who made this Assertion, the *Fool*, whose Folly will appear from these following Reasons:

1. That in making and holding this Assertion, he contradicts the general Judgment and Notion of Mankind, 87, 88.

2. That he lays aside a Principle easy and suitable to Reason, and substitutes in the room of it
one

one strange and harsh, and at the best, highly improbable, 89, 90.

3. His Folly appears from the Causes and Motives inducing him to take up this Opinion, which, amongst others, are, *1st*, Great Impiety, and Disquiet of Conscience consequent thereupon. *2dly*, Great Ignorance of Nature, and natural Causes, 91, 92.

4. From those Cases, in which such Persons begin to doubt and waver, and fly off from their Opinion instanced, *1st*, In the Time of some great and imminent Danger, 92.---*2dly*, In the Time of approaching Death, 92 to 94.

The modern and more thorough-pac'd Sinners affect a Superiority in Villany above their Ancestors; therefore this Discourse against Atheism is supposed to be of some Use; and if so, the most proper Use is, to give every one of us a View and Prospect into his own Heart: And such as are willing to watch over that, so as to prevent this monstrous Birth, are advised to beware, 95, 96.

1. Of great and crying Sins, such as make th Conscience raw and sick.

2. Of Discontents about the cross Passages of God's Providence towards them.

3. Of devoting themselves to Pleasure and Sensuality, there being nothing in the World that casts God out of the Heart like it.

S E R M O N I V.

Preached on the 29th of May, at Westminster-Abbey.

PSALM cvi. 7. *Our Fathers understood not thy Wonders in Egypt, they remember'd not the*

Multitude of thy Mercies, but provok'd him at the Sea, even at the Red-Sea.

The Resemblance between the Transactions of Providence with the Children of *Israel* in their Redemption from *Aegypt*, and with ourselves in the Restoration of the Royal Family, being briefly considered, 98 to 101. To shew how like we are to them for their miraculous Ingratitude, we must observe three Things in the Text:

I. The unworthy and ungrateful Deportment of the *Israelites* towards God, upon a most signal Mercy and Deliverance, *they provok'd him*; which Expression seems to import an insolent daring Resolution to offend; and, as it relates to God, strikes at him in a three-fold Respect:

1. It rises up against his Power and Prerogative, 102, 103.
2. It imports an Abuse of his Goodness, 103, 104.
3. It is an Affront upon his Long-suffering and his Patience, 104, 105.

II. The 2d Thing to be observed is, the Aggravation of this Deportment from the Nature and Circumstance of the Deliverance, *They provok'd him at the Sea, even at the Red-Sea*. The Baseness and Ingratitude of which God casts in their Teeth, by confronting it with the glorious Deliverance he vouchsafed them; a Deliverance ennobled with these four Qualifications:—1st, Its Greatness, 106 to 108.—2^{dly}, Its Unexpectedness, 108 to 113.—3^{dly}, The eminent Seasonableness of it, 113 to 115.—4^{tly}, Its absolute Undeservedness, 116 to 120. Our Case is severally shewn in the above Particulars to be parallel to that of the *Israelites*, and likewise in the Return made to God for his Goodness.

III. The 3d Thing observable is, The Cause of this Misbehaviour, *They understood not thy Wonders in Egypt.* Now in every wonderful Passage of Providence, two Things are to be considered, 120.

1. The Author, by whom it is done.
2. The End, for which it is done : Neither of these, in the Cases before us, were understood by the *Israelites*, nor have been attended to by us, as they ought to have been, 121 to 123.

S E R M O N V.

MATTH. xvii. 21. *Howbeit, this Kind goeth not out but by Prayer and Fasting.*

It was a general received Command, and an acknowledged Rule of Practice in all Ages and Places of the Christian World, that we are *to bear the Church*; which, being acted by the immediate Guidance of the Holy Ghost, hath set apart the Time of our Saviour's Fasting in the Wilderness, to be solemnized with the anniversary Exercise of Abstinence, for the subduing the Flesh and quickning the Spirit, 124 to 128.

As for the Words, among other Expositions, they are more judiciously interpreted of an Evil Spirit, having had long and inveterate Possession of the Party out of whom it was cast, and the Sense of them, as improvable into a standing perpetual Precept, is this, That there are some Vices, which partly by our Temper and Constitution, partly by Habit and inveterate Continuance, have so firm an hold of us, that they cannot be thoroughly dispossess'd but with the greatest Ardour and Constancy of Prayer, joined with the hardest Severities of Mortification, 128, 129. In

In the Text are two Parts;

1st, An Intimation of a peculiar Duty, Prayer and Fasting.

2^{dly}, The End and Design it, which is to eject and dispossess the unclean Spirit. The entire Discussion is manag'd in three Particulars.

I. In taking a Survey of the Extent of this Text, 129.

This Duty of Fasting admits of several Kinds and Degrees; the 1st Kind is of constant universal Exercise; universal, both because it obliges at all Times, and extends to all Persons, 129 to 131.—The 2^d is a Fast of a total Abstinence, when for some time we wholly abstain from all bodily Repasts, 132 to 134.—The 3^d, is an Abstinence from bodily Refreshments, in respect of a certain Sort or Degree, and that undertook for some Space of Time, 134 to 138. This Head is closed with a Caution, that the Observation of Fasting in this solemn Season should be *so strict*, as not to bend to any Man's Luxury; *so dispensable*, as not to grate upon his Infirmary of Body, 138 to 141.

II. In shewing what are the Qualifications that must render this Duty of Fasting acceptable to God, and efficacious to ourselves, 141.

There are four Conditions or Properties, a joint Concurrence of all which is a necessary Qualification of it, for this great Purpose.—1st, That it is to be used not as a Duty either necessary or valuable in itself, but only as an Instrument, 142 to 147.—2^d, That it be done with a hearty Detestation of the Body of Sin, for the weakening of which it is design'd, 147 to 150.—3^d, That it be quickened and enlivened with Prayer, 150 to 152.—4th, That it be attended with Alms and Works of Charity, 152 to 154.

III.

III. In shewing how this Duty of Fasting comes to have such an Influence in dispossessing the Evil Spirit, and subduing our Corruptions, 154.

It does not effect this.—*Either* 1st, by any casual Force naturally inherent in itself.—Neither 2^{dly}, by way of Merit, as procuring and engaging the Help of that Grace, that does effect it, 155.—But it receives this great Virtue,—1st, From divine Institution.—2^{dly}, By being a direct Defiance to that Disposition of Body and Mind, upon which especially the Devil works, 156, 157. But when we have taken all these Courses to eject the evil Spirit, we must remember, that it is to be the Work of God himself, whom the *blessed Spirits* adore, and whom the *evil obey*, 158.

S E R M O N VI. and VII.

REVEL. ii. 16. *Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against them with the Sword of my Mouth.*

It is wonderful upon what Ground a rational discerning Man can satisfy and speak Peace to his Conscience in the very Career of those Sins, which, by his own Confession, lead him to assured Perdition, 159, 160. One would think that the Cause of it, must of Necessity be one of these three:

1st, That he is ignorant of the Curse attending his Sin, 161. Which cannot be here the Cause.

2^{dly}, That he may know the Curse, and yet not believe it, 161.

3^{dly}, That though he knows and believes the Curse, yet perhaps he relaxes nothing of his Sin, because he resolves to bear it, 162.

But

But it is shewn, that it can proceed from neither of these Reasons, therefore the true one is conceiv'd to be a presuming Confidence of a future Repentance: Other Reasons indeed may allure, this only argues a Man into Sin, 163, 164. Now the Face of these Words is directly set against this Soul-devouring Imposture of a deferr'd Repentance. In the Prosecution of them, it will be convenient to enquire into their Occasion. In the 12th Verse we find, they are Part of a Letter to the Church (here collectively taken, as including in it many particular Churches) of *Pergamos*, en-dited by the Spirit of God, and directed to the Angel, that is, the chief Pastor of that Church, 165. to 167.

The Letter contains a Charge for some sinful Abuse that had crept in, and was connived at, Verse 14. This Abuse was its Toleration of the *Nicolaitans*, whose Heresy consisted in this,—1st, That they held and abetted the eating of Sacrifices offered to Idols to be lawful.—2dly, That they held and abetted the Lawfulness of Fornication, 167, 168.

It likewise contained the Counsel of speedy and immediate Repentance in the Words of the Text, in which are two Parts:

1. The First stands directed to the Church itself: *Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly.* God's *coming* is shewn to mean here his Approach in the Way of Judgment, 169 to 173.

2. The other Part of the Words relates to those Hereticks: *And I will fight against thee with the Sword of my Mouth:* That is, with the reprehending, discovering Force of the Word, and the Censures of the Church, 173. From this Expression these two occasional Observations are collected:

1. That the Word of God, powerfully dispensed, has the Force and Efficacy of a spiritual Sword, 174.

2. When God undertakes the purging of a Church, or the Reformation of Religion, he does it with the Weapons of Religion, with the *Sword of his Mouth*, 175, 176.

The general Explication of the Words thus finished, the principal Design of them is prosecuted, by enforcing the Duty of immediate Repentance; which is done,

I. In shewing what that Repentance is that is here enjoined, 177.

Repentance in Scripture has a three-fold Acceptation.

1. It is taken for the first Act, by which the Soul turns from Sin to God, 178.

2. It is taken for the whole Course of a pious Life, from a Man's first turning from a wicked Life to the last Period of a godly: Which is the only Repentance that *Socinus* will admit. But this is not the proper Notion of Repentance, 1st, Because then no Man could properly be said to have repented till his Death. 2^{dly}, Because Scripture, no less than the natural Reason of the Thing itself, places Repentance before Faith. 3^{dly}, Because Scripture makes all those subsequent Acts of new Obedience after our first turning to God, not to be the *integral constituent Parts*, but the *Effects, Fruits, and Consequents* of Repentance, 179 to 181.

3. Repentance is taken for a Man's turning to God after the Guilt of some particular Sin, 181, 182.

II. Arguments are produced to engage us in the speedy and immediate Exercise of this Duty, which are,

1. That no Man can be secure of the future, 183 to 186.

2. That, supposing the Allowance of Time, yet we cannot be sure of Power to repent, 186 to 191.

3. That, admitting a Man has both Time and Grace to repent, yet, by such Delay, the Work will be incredibly more difficult, 191 to 196.— And the Delay of this Duty is most eminently and signally provoking to God, upon these Reasons, 197.

1. Because it is the Abuse of a Remedy, 197, 198.

2. Because it clearly shews that a Man does not love it as a Duty, but only intends to use it for an Expedient of Escape, 198 to 200.

3. Because it is evidently a counter-plotting of God, and being wise above the prescribed Methods of Salvation, to which God makes the immediate Dereliction of Sin necessary, 200 to 202.

After the general Nature of this Subject, follows a Consideration of it in particular. The grand Instance of it is a Death-Bed Repentance; the Efficacy of which, having been much disputed in the World, is here discussed under two Heads:

I. This great Case of Conscience is resolved, whether a Death-Bed Repentance ever is, or can be effectual to Salvation, 202.—Several Arguments against it being stated and answered, 203 to 214.—Six positive Arguments are produced to prove and assert it.

1. That such a Repentance commenced at the last

last Hour of a Man's Life, has *de facto* proved effectual to Salvation, 214 to 216.

2. Is taken from the Truth and Certainty of that Saying, owned and attested by God himself, *that if there be first a willing Mind, it is accepted, according to that a Man bath, and not according to that a Man bath not*, 216, 217.

3. Because Repentance saves not, as it is a Work, or such a Number of Works, but as it is the Effect of a renew'd Nature, and a sanctified Heart, from which it flows, 217 to 219.

4. If to repent sincerely, be a Thing, at the last Moments of our Lives, impossible to be done, then, for that Instant, Impenitence is not a Sin, 219.

5. That to deny that a Death-Bed Repentance can be effectual to Salvation, is a clear Restraint and Limitation of the Compass and Prerogative of God's Mercy, 219, 220.

6. That if a Death-Bed Repentance cannot possibly be effectual to Salvation, then a Sinner upon his Death-Bed, having not repented before, may lawfully, and without Sin, despair, 221.

II. Supposing a Death-Bed Repentance may prove effectual, yet for any one to design and build upon it beforehand, is highly dangerous, and therefore absolutely irrational, which appears from these Considerations:

1. From the exceeding Unfitness of a Man at this Time, above all others, to exercise this Duty, 222 to 225.

2. That there can be no Arguments, from which either the dying Person himself, or others by him, can certainly conclude that his Repentance is sound and effectual, 225 to 228. In

In fine, this alone can be said for it, (and to a considering Person, no more need to be said against it) that it is only not impossible.

S E R M O N VIII.

ROM. i. 3, 4. *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the Seed of David, according to the Flesh:*

And declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead.

Where the Construction of the Text lies so, that we cannot otherwise reach the full Sense of it without making our Way through Doubts and Ambiguities, Philosophical Discourses are necessary in dispensing the Word.

The present Exercise therefore consists of two Parts:

I. An Explication of the Words: For the Scheme of the *Greek* carries a very different Face from our Translation, which Difference renders the Sense of them very disputable, 231.

The Explication is comprised in the Resolution of these four Enquiries:

1. Whether the Translation rightly renders it, that Christ was *declar'd to be the Son of God*, since the Original admits of a different Signification, 232 to 234.

2. What is imputed by this Term, *with Power*, 234.

3. What is intended by the following Words, *according to the Spirit of Holiness*, 235, 236.

4.

4. How those Words, *by the Resurrection from the Dead*, are to be understood, 236 to 239.

II. An Accommodation of the Words to the present Occasion, which is in shewing, *First*, How Christ's Resurrection may be a proper Argument to prove his Divinity and eternal Sonship, 239 to 243.---*Next*, That it is the greatest and principal of all others.

And for this we may observe, that it is not only *true*, but more *clear* and *evident* than the other Arguments for the Proof of the Truth of Christ's Doctrine; when we consider them as they are generally reduceable to these three, 243.

1. The Nature of the Things taught by him, 244 to 246.

2. The fulfilling of Prophecies in his Person, 246, 247.

3. The Miracles and wonderful Works which he did in the Time of his Life, 247. And tho' these were undoubtedly high Proofs of Christ's Doctrine, yet his Resurrection had a vast Preheminence over them upon two Accounts.

1. That all the Miracles he did, supposing his Resurrection had not followed, would not have had sufficient Efficacy to have proved him to be the *Messias*. But his Resurrection alone, without Relation to his preceding Miracles, had been a full Proof of the Truth of his Doctrine, which appears upon these two Accounts: *1st*, That considered absolutely in itself, it did outweigh all the rest of his Works put together. *2dly*, That it had a more intimate and near Connexion with his Doctrine than any of the rest, 248, 249.

2. Because of the general Opinion and Judgment that the World had of both, 249.

The *Jews* and Unbelievers never attempted to assign any Causes of the Resurrection besides the Power of God, so as by that means to destroy the Miraculousness of it; tho' they constantly took Exceptions to Christ's other Miracles, still resolving them into some Cause short of a Divine Power, which Exceptions may be reduced to these two Heads:

1. The great Difficulty of discerning when an Action is really a Miracle, 250 to 252.

2. Supposing an Action is known to be a Miracle, it is as difficult to know whether it proves the Truth of the Doctrine of that Person that does it, or not, 252 to 255.---But neither of these Exceptions take Place against the Resurrection. For,

1st, Tho' we cannot assign the determinate Point where the Power of Nature ends, yet there are some Actions that, at first Appearance, so vastly transcend it, that there can be no Suspicion that they proceed from any Power but a Divine, 256.

2^{dly}, Should God suffer a Miracle to be done by an Impostor, yet there was no Necessity hence to gather, that God did it to confirm the Words of that Impostor: For God may do a Miracle when and where he pleases, 256 to 258.

S E R M O N IX.

ECCLES. i. 18. In much Wisdom there is much Grief; and he that increaseth Knowledge, increaseth Sorrow.

This Assertion is taken up upon Solomon's Judgment, who by the very Verdict of Omniscience itself, was of all Men in the World the most knowing.
After

After premising that, in speaking to the Text, the Patronage of Ignorance, especially in Things spiritual, is not intended; but if any thing is indeed said against Knowledge, it is against that only that is so much ador'd by the World, and falsely called Philosophy; and yet more significantly furnished by the Apostle, *Vain Philosophy*, 259 to 263.

To rectify the absurd Opinions of the World concerning Knowledge, and to take down the excessive Estimation of it, in the Prosecution of the Words, it is demonstrated to be the Cause, or at least the inseparable Companion of Sorrow in three respects, 264.

I. In respect of the Nature and Properties of the Thing itself, 264, 265.---Under this Head a Question is started, Whether or no there be indeed any such thing as true Knowledge in the World? And three Reasons advanced, which seem to insinuate that there is none, 265 to 267.---And then the Uncertainty of Knowledge, its Poorness, and utter Inability to contribute to the solid Enjoyments of Life, is shewn in several Theological and Philosophical Problems, 267 to 270.

II. In respect of the laborious and troublesome Acquisition of it: In setting forth which, the Scholar's Labour is consider'd with that of the Soldier and the Husbandman, and a View is taken of those Callings to which Learning is necessary, the Physician, the Lawyer, and the Divine, 270 to 274.

III. In respect of its Effects and Consequents, three whereof are instanced.

I. The Increase of Knowledge is an Increase of the Desire of Knowledge, 274.

22. *The Chief Heads of*

2. Knowledge rewards its Followers with the Miseries of Poverty, and cloathes them with Rags, 275 to 277.

3. Knowledge makes the Person who has it the Butt of Envy, the Mark of Obloquy and Contention; which considered, Men are advised to make him that is the great Author, also the Subject of their Knowledge. For tho' there is a Vanity, a Sorrow, and a Dissatisfaction in the Knowledge of created inferior Objects, yet we are assured, *that it is Life eternal to know God, and whom he has sent, his Son Christ Jesus*, 277 to 279.

S E R M O N X.

PSALM lxi. 18. *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not bear me.*

The Resolution and Model of this whole Psalm, which is *David's* grateful Commemoration of all God's Mercies, together with a Retribution of Praise being given, and therein the Occasion and Connexion of these Words, 180 to 182.--- They are consider'd two ways, 1st, As they have a peculiar Reference to *David* and his particular Condition; and so they are a vehement Asseveration of his Integrity, 282 to 284.---2^{dly}, Absolutely in themselves, and so they are applicable to all Men, 284.---And being resolved, as they lie in Supposition, into a positive Assertion, they afford this Doctrine; *Whosoever regards Iniquity in his Heart, the Lord will not bear him.* In Prosecution of which is shewn,

I. What it is for a Man to regard or love Sin

in his Heart, which he may be said to do several ways.

1. There is a constant and habitual Love of Sin in the Unregeneracy and corrupt Estate of the Soul, 285 to 289.

2. There is a regarding of Sin in the Heart, that consists in an unmortified Habit or Course of Sin, much different from the former, because even a Child of God may thus regard Sin, 289. Which may be evinced, *1st*, From Example, 290.—*2dly*, From Scripture-Reason, which is grounded upon those Exhortations that are there made even to Believers for the Mortification of Sin, 291. And the Soul may thus love Sin two ways, *1st*, Directly, and by a positive Pursuance of it. *2dly*, Indirectly, and by not attempting a vigorous Mortification of it, 292, 293.

3. There is another kind of regarding Sin in the Heart, and that is, by an actual Intention of the Mind upon Sin, 293 to 295.

II. What it is to have our Prayers accepted with God: And this is to prevail with God for the obtaining the good Thing we desire, by virtue of an Interest in Jesus Christ, and in the Covenant of Grace, 295. Several Objections to this Doctrine stated and answered, 296 to 301.

III. Whence it is that a Man's regarding or loving Sin in his Heart, hinders his Prayers from Acceptance with God.

1. Because in this Case he cannot pray by the Spirit, 301, 302.

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3. Because he cannot pray with Fervency,
which

which, next to Sincerity, is the great Qualification of Prayer, to which God has annexed the Promise of Acceptance, 304, 305.

By way of Application, the Duty of Sincerity in our Worship is pressed from these two Motives: *1st*, By praying to God with insincere, sin-regarding Hearts, we incur the certain Frustration of all our Prayers, 307.---*2dly*, In such Prayers we are not only certain not to gain a Blessing, but also we incur the Danger of a heavy Curse, 307 to 309. And to direct us how to pray with Sincerity, this Rule is laid down, to endeavour first to prepare our Hearts by a thorough and a strict Examination, 309, 310.

S E R M O N XI.

I JOHN iii. 20. *God is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all Things.*

The Words are plain, and need no Explication; therefore, after premising some Things concerning God's Attributes in general, 311 to 314. this Doctrine is drawn from them, not much different from the Words themselves, *viz. That God is an all-knowing God.* This is indeed a Principle, and therefore ought to be granted; yet since it is now controverted and denied by the *Arminians*, 315. and the *Socinians*, 316. it is no less needful to be proved. In Prosecution of this,

I. The Proposition is proved, and that both by Scripture, 317. and by Reason, 318. Under this Head we are exhorted to the Knowledge of God in Christ, 319 to 321.

II. Is shewn the Excellency of God's Knowledge above the Knowledge of Men or Angels, 321. and this appears,

1. From the Properties of this Knowledge: Now its *first* Property is, the exceeding Evidence, and consequently the Certainty of it, 322.—Its *second* Property is this, that it is a Knowledge independent upon the Existence of the Object or Thing known, 323. For God beholds all Things in himself, and that two ways, *1st*, By reflecting upon his Power, and what he can do, he has a perfect Knowledge of all Possibilities, and of Things that may be produced. *2dly*, By reflecting upon his Power and his Will, he knows whatsoever shall be actually produced, 324.

2. The Excellency of God's Knowledge appears in respect of his Objects, which are all Things knowable; but they may be reduced to three especially, which God alone perfectly knows, and are not to be known to Men or Angels. *1st*, The Nature of God himself, 325.—*2dly*, Things future, 325 to 331.—*3dly*, The Thoughts of Men, 331, 332.

III. Is shewn, by way of Application, that the Consideration of God's Omniscience may serve as an Argument to press several Duties upon us. *1st*, It must be a strong Motive to bring us to a free Confession of all our Sins to God, 332 to 334.—*2dly*, It may enforce us to an humble Submission to all God's Commands and Directions, and that both in respect of Belief, 335, and of Practice, 336.—*3dly*, That as we are commanded *to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect*, we should endeavour to resemble him in Knowledge, Wisdom, and Under-
standing,

standing, that we make a true Judgment of every thing relating to our temporal or eternal Happiness or Misery, 338, 339.

S E R M O N XII.

A Fast Sermon, preached in 1658.

JONAH iii 8, 9. But let Man and Beast be covered with Sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil Way, and from the Violence that is in their Hands.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce Anger, that we perish not?

We are called this Day by public Authority to the Work of Humiliation; and the Occasion of this Work is the deplorable Eruption of a sad Distemper in sundry Parts of the Nation, and the Cause of this, we are to know, is Sin.

In this Chapter we have the Example of a Fast celebrated by Heathens, (the Men of *Nineveh*) but worthy of the Imitation of the best Christians, 341.

Here are several Things considerable.

1. *Jonah's* Denunciation of a Judgment of God impendent upon them.

2. Their Humiliation upon the hearing of this Judgment, in which Fast or Humiliation there is considerable.

I. The Manner of it, which consists in two Things, 1st, The external Humiliation of the Body. 2^{dly}, An internal spiritual Separation from Sin.

II.

II. The universal Extent of it, and the particular Application of it, *ver.* 8.

III. The Motive of it, which was Hope of Mercy, and a Pardon upon the Exercise of this Duty.

The Words will afford six Considerations, which are here discussed.

1st Observation. The Consideration of a Judgment approaching unto, or actually lying upon a People, is a sufficient Argument for Fasting and Humiliation: *1st*, Because in every Judgment God calls for Humiliation; they are the Alarms of the Almighty, by which he terrifies and awakens sleepy Souls, 243.—*2dly*, It deserves our Humiliation: Tho' this be an unpleasing Duty to the Flesh, yet it is abundantly countervailed by the Greatness of the Trouble it does remove, 344.

2d Observation. The Affliction of the Body is a good Preparative to the Humiliation of the Soul: *1st*, Because the Operations of the Soul do much follow the Disposition and Temper of the Body, 345.—*2dly*, Because afflicting of the Body curbs the Flesh, and makes it serviceable to the Spirit, 346.

3d Observation. The Nature of a Fast especially consists in a real, sincere Separation from Sin. The Truth of this will appear from these Considerations, *1st*, That Fasting is a Spiritual Duty, 349.—*2dly*, The Nature of a Fast chiefly consists in a Separation from Sin, because this is the proper End of it, 350 to 352.

4th Observation. National Sins deserve National Humiliation, 352.—*1st*, Because a general Humiliation tends most to solve the Breach of God's Honour,

Honour, 353. — *2dly*, Generality gives Force and Strength to Humiliation, 354.

5th Observation. The best way to avert a National Judgment, is for every particular Man to enquire into and amend his own personal particular Sins. This is proved, *1st*, Because particular Sins oftentimes fetch down general universal Judgments, 354. which God sometimes inflicts upon that Account, *1st*, To shew us the provoking Nature of Sin, 355. or else because, tho' the Sin is particular in respect of the Subject and Cause of it, yet it may be general in respect of its Contagion. *2dly*, Because if there were no Personal, there could be no National Sin, 356. — *3dly*, Because God takes especial Notice of particular Sins, 358 to 360. — *4thly*, No Humiliation can be well and sincere unless it be personal and particular, 360 to 362.

6th Observation. Upon our serious Humiliation for, and forsaking of our Sins, there is sufficient Argument in God's Mercy to hope for a Removal of the severest Judgment, 362, which will appear, *1st*, Because God has promised it, 363. — *2dly*, Because God has often removed Judgments upon a sincere Humiliation, 364. — *3dly*, Because in this God attains the Ends of his Judgments, 366 to 368.

S E R M O N I.

PROVERBS xiv. 18. latter Part.

— *But a wounded spirit who can bear!*

THE corruption of man's nature is, by sad experience, found to be so great, that few are kept from sin, but merely by the check of their fears, representing to them the endless, insupportable torments of another world, as the certain consequent and terrible reward of it. Which fears, if men arrive to such a pitch of atheism, as to be able to shake off, (a perfection now a-days attain'd to by many, and aspir'd to by more,) there seems to be nothing left further to work upon such persons, in the way of *fear*, nor consequently to control, and put a stop to the full career and fury of their *lusts*.

Upon which account it will (I conceive) be no ill service to religion, to let such profligate wretches know, that their infidelity cannot set them so far out of the reach of vengeance, but that, while they endeavour to cast off all dread

of future damnation, God can antedate the torments they disbelieve, and convince them of the possibility of such miseries hereafter, by an actual foretaste of the same here; that he can kindle one Hell within them, before they enter into another; and by what he can make them *feel*, teach them the certainty of what they refuse to *fear*.

It is, indeed, none of the least of God's titles and prerogatives, that he is *the God of the spirits of all flesh*; and that, as he first made the soul, so he retains an immediate irresistible Power over it, so as to be able to turn the inclinations, and to dispose of the comfort and the sorrows of it, as he pleases; and all this independently upon any of those objects, which, by the ordinary course of nature, it converses with. The usual materials, of which the soul makes up its comforts and satisfactions here on earth, are the felicities of this world; and the ordinary cause of its sorrows are the adverse, and cross Accidents of the same: nevertheless, God can infuse comfort into the soul, in spite of the sharpest earthly calamities, and on the other hand, smite it with the severest anguish and bitterness, in the midst of the highest affluence and prosperity.

The text presents us here with a short, but full comparison between the grief that afflicts the outward man, and that which preys upon the inward; together with the transcendent greatness of the latter above the former, as shall be made out presently in the grand instance of both

both these sorts of sufferings, even our blessed Saviour himself. For let this outside, or shell of nature, the body, be under never so much pain and agony, yet a well-settled and resolved mind will be able to buoy it up, and keep it from sinking: the spirits *will bear*, and by *bearing*, will, at length, master all these *infirmities*. But, when the *spirit itself is wounded*, and struck through, the grief presently becomes victorious, and intolerable. The soul, in this case, being like a bird wounded in the wing, the proper instrument and natural engine of its support, this immediately puts an end to its flight, and makes all striving vain; for fall it must to the ground.

In the Words there are two things to be explained.

I. What is meant by *spirit*.

II. What is imported by its being *wounded*.

1st. For the first of these, we are to observe, that both scripture, and philosophy hold forth to us in the soul of man, *an upper and a lower* part; not, indeed, in respect of its *substance*, for that is *indivisible*, but in respect of its *faculties*. And, as this lower, or inferior part, consists of those sensitive faculties and appetites, whose operations being wholly tied to the organs of the body, do accordingly converse only with bodily and gross objects; so there is an higher, and more noble portion of the Soul, purely *intellectual*; and, in operation, as well

as in substance, perfectly *spiritual*. Which is called by philosophers τὸ Ἡγεμονικόν, that is, the leading, ruling, and directing part of the soul; and, by the Scripture, *the spirit of the mind*; that is, the most exalted, refined, and quintessential part of it; in *Ephes. iv. 23. Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind.* For that the soul is a spirit, that is to say, a *substance* void of *matter and dimensions*, I suppose none will deny; but those (who with your oracle, *Hobbs*, in the head of them) admit of no *substance*, but *body*; and, having fully subdued *faith to senses*, and so (like *Thomas*) resolving to believe no further than your *eyes and hands* can reach, will, perhaps, in *religion*, as well as *natural* objects, make *the tube, the still, and the telescope*, the sole measure of their *creed*. In defiance of which atheistical notions, I affirm, that there is a certain noble and refined Part of the soul expressed to us in the text, by *spirit*, and here said to *be wounded*. Which is the

2^d Thing to be explained by us; and, I suppose, is so far and fully explained by us already, from the very nature of the subject, to which it is here ascribed, that every one presently apprehends it to be an expression purely *figurative*; and that the soul, *being drowned*, signifies nothing else, but its being deeply and intimately possessed with a lively sense of God's wrath for sin, dividing, entering, and forcing its way into the most vital parts of it, as a *sword or rapier* does into the body. I say, possessed with a sense of God's wrath for sin; forasmuch as
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there is no grief, but *meritoriously* presupposes sin as the cause of it: not that I deny, but God by his absolute prerogative, without any violation of his other attribute, could, and might grieve, and afflict an innocent person, if he so pleased; but that by the stated rule of his transactings with men, he has resolved the contrary, and never afflicts, or torments any rational creature that is not a *sinner*, either by *actual commission*, or at least by *imputation*.

Now, this brief explication of the words being premised, the sense of them lies full and clear in this one proposition; *viz.*

That the trouble and anguish of a soul labouring under a sense of God's displeasure for sin, is inexpressibly greater than any other grief or trouble whatsoever.

The prosecution of which I shall manage under these following particulars.

- I. I shall shew *what kind of persons* are the *proper subjects* of this trouble.
- II. I shall shew wherein the *excessive greatness of this trouble doth appear*.
- III. I shall shew by *what ways and means* it is brought upon the soul.
- IV. What is *God's end and design* in casting men into such a perplexed condition: and, *Vtibly and Lastly*, I shall draw *some useful Inferences* from the whole.

Of each of which in their order.

1st, *And first*, for the *persons* who are the *proper objects* of this trouble. These I affirm

to be, indifferently, both the righteous, and the wicked, both such as God loves, and such as he hates; but with a very different issue in one, and in the other. The reason of which assertion is, because these troubles and spiritual terrors are not, as such, either acts or figures of grace, by which alone persons truly pious and regenerate, are distinguished from the wicked and degenerate; but they are properly effects of God's anger, striking and afflicting the soul for sin, and consequently are alike incident to *both sorts*, forasmuch as *both are sinners*; and even the most pious person in the world has fuel enough in his guilty soul for the wrath of God to flame out upon in all these terrible rebukes. Nay, where there is no inherent guilt, these effects of wrath may take place: As in the case of our saviour, who, without the least personal inherent guilt, suffered the utmost that an angry God could inflict upon him in this world. And therefore nothing certain can be concluded of any man's spiritual estate, in reference to his future happiness or misery, from the present terrors and amusements that his conscience labours under: For, as *Cain*, and *Judas*, and many more reprobates, have suffered, so *David*, and many other excellent saints of God, have felt their shares of the same; tho' the issue, I confess, has not been the same in both; but that alters not the nature of the thing itself.

Nay, I shall add further, that according to the present oeconomy of God's dealing with
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the souls of men, persons truly good and holy do more frequently taste of this bitter cup than the wicked and the reprobate; who are seldom alarum'd out of their sins by such severe interruptions; but, for the most part, remain seated up in ease and security, to the fearful day of retribution. And therefore I should be so far from passing any harsh or doubtful sentence upon the condition of a person struggling under the apprehensions of God's wrath, that I should, on the contrary, account such an one a much fitter subject for evangelical comfort, than those sons of assurance, that having been bred up in a constant confidence of the Divine Favour to them, never yet felt the least doubt or question arising in their secure hearts about it: and, consequently, should think the balsom of pardoning mercy the only proper infusion for such *wounded spirits*, while the gall and vinegar of the curse, the causticks and corrosives of the law were the fittest applications to be made to such brawny, unrelenting hearts, as never yet smarted under any remorse, nor experimentally knew, what it was to be troubled for sin. And thus, having shewn upon what kind of persons this trouble of mind may fall; I come now to the

2d Particular; which is to shew, *wherein the strange, excessive*, and, sometimes, supernatural greatness of it does appear. In which, tho' I may seem to contradict that, in the prosecution, which I had asserted in the doctrine; namely, that this trouble was beyond expres-

sion : it being of the nature and number of those things that are rather to be *felt*, than *described* ; yet, so far as the dimensions of it can be taken, we may collect the surpassing greatness of it from these following discoveries.

I. First, from the behaviour of our Saviour himself in this condition. It was, indeed, a sense of God's *wrath for sin*, that he was under ; but for sin never *committed* by him, for guilt that was *none of his*, but only by *imputation*, and account of law, founded upon his own *free act*, in the voluntary assuming of the person of a *surety*, undertaking to discharge that vast debt of mankind to the Divine Justice, in his own body upon the cross. Upon which account alone, the wrath of God for sin could have any thing to do with him, who in his own person and actions was absolutely, perfectly, and entirely *innocent*, or rather, even *innocence* itself.

Now, I think, I may with great truth affirm this, in all the sufferings that sin can possibly bring upon the sinner, there is, without all peradventure, something more grievous and corroding to the mind of man, from his being *conscious* that he has *actually committed* the sin he suffers for, than in all the sharpest and most afflicting impressions of pain, of which that suffering, as to the matter of it, does consist. Otherwise, surely, the voice of reason in the bare discourses of nature, could never have risen so high, as to affirm that a wise, or dextrous man could not be miserable ; that he was un-
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concerned in all bodily pain, and might sting in *Phalaris's* bull. But scripture, which is the best, and experience, which is the next philosophy, have put the matter past all doubt; the first telling us, that it is *sin only is the sting of death*. And the other perpetually ringing this sad peal in every suffering sinner's conscience, *Perditio tua ex te*; that his misery is but the due and just consequent of his own actions, the genuine fruit of his own free, unconstrained choice. And this is that, that envenoms the cup of God's fury, and adds *poison* to the *bitterness* of that fatal draught.

But now, this part of suffering *for* sin, or rather, *from* sin, Christ neither did, nor could undergo; it being a contradiction, that he, who never committed sin, should feel in his conscience those stings, and remorse, that can spring only from a sense of having committed it. No; these are the natural, essential results of a sinful act; and so rest wholly within the person of the agent: the primitive rewards of sin; which consist, properly, in those pains, which, by positive sanction of law, are adjudged to every sinful action; and to which alone Christ did, or could subject himself.

And yet, we see, the sense of the Divine Wrath exerting itself upon Christ only in these latter, and stripp'd of the poison of all *personal* guilt, was so direful and intolerable, that it made *him*, who was God, as well as man; *him*, to whom all power in heaven and earth was given; *him*, by, and for whom God made the world,

world, and in whom the very fulness of the Godhead dwelt, bodily; even this infinite, mighty person, this Man of God's right hand, (as the prophet David calls him) did it make to crouch and languish, to roar, and to despond, and, at length, to sink and die under the overpowering, confounding pressures of it.

And, surely, a greater argument of the force and fury of this sense of God's wrath for sin, could not be, than that it should have such dismal affect upon one, who, personally, was no sinner; but only lay under a borrow'd guilt; one who had all the advantages of *strength*, and the supports of *innocence*, to keep his mind firm, serene, and impenetrable. But all this availed him little, when the deadly infusion had once got into his soul, seized the main arsenal, and strong hold of his humanity; and, in a word, cut the nerve of its great, and last supporter, the *spirit*. And, in this case, human nature, tho' advanced to a personal union and conjunction with the divine, yet was but *human nature* still; that is, a poor feeble thing, forced to confess its native weakness, and, after a short conflict with the Divine Wrath, to break, and fall under its own ruins. So that it may justly put that high and doleful exclamation into the mouths of all who shall consider Christ upon the cross; *Lord, who knoweth the power of thine anger!* God only can know it; and he only, *who* was much more than man, could endure it.

2dly, The

2dly, The strength and greatness of this trouble of mind for sin, appears from those most raised and passionate expressions, that have been uttered from time to time, by persons eminent in the ways of God, while they were labouring under it. For a notable instance of which, instead of many, let us hear *David*, a person frequently in these deep plunges, roaring out his spiritual-grievances in most of his Psalms. And I single him out before all others, because he was certainly and signally a type of Christ, both in respect of many things belonging to his person, and many passages relating to his life; and particularly that dolorous part of it that contained his sufferings, and immediately before his death. Which sufferings we have him with great life and clearness representing, in several of his divine hymns; which, howsoever uttered by him, in the first person, as if he were still speaking of himself; yet, without all question, in the principal design and purport of them, pointed at the Messiah, as their most proper subject. The 22d Psalm is very full, as to his bodily sufferings; but in none of all the Psalms is the spiritual part of his passion set forth to that height that it is in the 77th Psalm, from the first verse to the 10th: in which it will be well worth our while distinctly to consider some of the most remarkable expressions.

As in the third verse, *I complained* (says he) *and my spirit was overwhelmed*. Which is the language of a sorrow much different from that
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of a common, worldly grief; a grief that would have expressed itself far otherwise; as, *I complained*, I vented a few sighs, and a few tears, and the cloud was presently over; when the *shower* was fallen, all was *clear*: sorrow, perhaps, lasted for a night, but it broke with the day, and the return of joy came quickly in the morning. But the spiritual sorrow, here mentioned, was still making a progress, still upon the advance, from the tongue, to the spirit, from outward expressions, to more inward apprehensions. Every sigh and groan rebounded back to the heart, from whence it came. The penitent eye, like the widow's cruze, the more it pours forth, the fuller it is; finding a supply (as it were) in every effusion.

But this sorrow stops not here; it does not only alarm his complaints, but also break his natural rest. In the fourth verse, *Thou holdest mine eyes watering*. Just as in that black night before our Saviour's crucifixion; in which it is said of him, that *he began to be sorrowful, and very heavy; nay, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*; we find, that he continued watching, from the beginning to the end of it, without any sleep; when yet the *disciples* were not able to hold their eyes open. Now this is an undoubted argument of an overpowering grief: for, when *Darius* was excessively troubled for *Daniel*, it is said of him, in *Daniel* vi. 18, *that he passed the night fasting, and his sleep went from him*. And then, for *Job*, in *Job* vii. 13, 14. *When I say, my bed shall comfort me, and my*

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13

my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me with visions.

When a man's *sleep* is his torment, what can be his *rest* ! The time of sleep is the only season in which an afflicted person does (as it were) seal some little reprieve from his cares, and for a while deceives his sorrows. But, in this case, the workings of the soul become too potent for the inclinations of nature. For, tho' sleep be designed by nature to repair and make up the expence of a man's spirits ; and withal, nothing spends the spirits comparable to sorrow ; yet, here we see the anguish of this spiritual sorrow joins two contrary effects, and at the same time both exhausts the *spirits*, and hinders all *repose* ; forcibly holding up the eyelids, and, by a continual flow of tears, keeping them still open. A watchful eye, and a mournful heart, are usually companions.

But, neither is this the utmost effect of this sorrow ; it comes at length to swell to that excess, as to be even too bigg for utterance ; as appears from the following words, in the same verse ; *I am so troubled, that I cannot speak.* Words, to none more applicable, than to him ; *who, when he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, was, like a sheep also, dumb, before his shearer, and opened not his mouth,* Acts viii. 32. Which is yet an higher declaration of an overpressing grief, than the loudest outcries. For nature has not only given a man a voice, but also silence, whereby to manifest the inward passions and affections of his mind. And such a
silence

silence speaks the heart so full of sorrow, that, like a vessel, its very fulness sometimes hinders all vent. It is a known saying, that ordinary slight griefs *complain*, but great sorrows strike the heart with an astonished *silence*. Thorns make a crackling blaze, and are quickly gone; but great wood lies a long time, and consumes with a silent fire. A still grief is a devouring grief; such an one as preys upon the vitals, sinks into the bones, and dries up the marrow. That wound is of all others the most deadly, that causes the heart to *bleed inwardly*.

Thus we have seen this sorrow, both in its greatness, and variety; sometimes falling forth in restless clamours and complaints, and sometimes again retreating into a silence, and (if you will admit the expression) even proclaiming itself in dumbness, and stupefaction: tho', whether rising in one, or falling in the other; like a man, whether standing upright, or lying down, it loses nothing of its proportion, and greatness; as the sea, when it ebbs, no less than when it flows, has still the fulness of an ocean.

But, neither does it continue long under this amazed silence; but we have it presently again rising up, and boiling over in complaints much more vehement and passionate than the former; as appears from the seventh, to the tenth verses: *Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone, for ever; and doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And what*

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was all this, but a prophetick paraphrase upon those words of our Saviour upon the cross; *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* Certainly, there is something in them more than ordinary. For, could a common grief have indited such expressions? Every word is a strain above nature; every sentence is the copy of such a sorrow, as rather would express itself, than either does, or can. And, surely, he that shall duly ponder the weight, relish the paths, and consider that spiritual vigour, that sparkles in every period of them, will find them greater, and higher than any expressions that the sense of an external calamity could suggest. They are the very breathings of despair, and the words of a soul scorched with the direful apprehensions of God's wrath, and a total eclipse of his favour. The truth is, they sound like words spoken at a rate or pitch above a mere man, and, I doubt not, were dictated by the Holy Ghost, to set forth the sufferings of him, who was so.

3dly, The excessive greatness of this trouble of mind appears from the uninterrupted, incessant continuance of it. It does not come and go by fits, or paroxysms: it has no pauses, or vicissitudes; for then the respite of one hour might lay in strength to endure the troubles of the next. From the very first minute of our Saviour's passion, from the first arrest and seizure of his righteous soul, the anguish of this sorrow never left it, 'till it had forced that to leave his body. Nothing could make the

powers:

powers of darkness quit their hold of so great a prize. As *David* again has it, (and still, no doubt, prophetically of Christ, in this his last, and great scene of misery) in *Psalms* xxii. 2. *I cry in the day-time, but thou heardest not, and in the night season, and am not silent.* He seems here to describe this *man of sorrow* at his night-agonies and devotions in the garden, as well as groaning out the inward pangs of his soul on the day of his crucifixion. There was no distinction of *night* and *day*, during his sufferings; but, without any lucid intervals of comfort, he was under one continued darkness of desertion. Hence we have the like pathetic outcry again in *Psalms* xxxix. ver. 13. *O, spare me a little, that I may recover my strength.* He begged of God, but to grant him so much as a little breathing-time, and for a while to intermit the strokes of his fury. For, when there is no release to be had from wrath, the next mitigation is to have some respite under it: the nature of man being so very impotent and feeble, that it is not able to bear a continual pleasure, and much less a continual sorrow. This it was that made *Job's* affliction hardly to be paralleled or expressed, that so many killing mischiefs, and disasters came thronging (as it were) one in the neck of another. No sooner was one sad story ended, but another presently began. So that his heart was so employ'd, and taken up in admitting, and drinking in the sorrow, that still came flowing into it, that it had no truce or relaxation to utter

ter or discharge it ; like a man receiving money faster than he can tell it : His incomes nonplus his accounts. In which, and the like cases, God's hand does not only strike, but, as it is emphatically, in *Psalms xxxviii. 2. It also presseth the soul.* And, what is pressure, but the continuation of a blow ! nay, what is *hell itself*, but sorrow, without intermission !

4thly, The height and greatness of this spiritual trouble appears from its violent and more than ordinary manifestation of itself on outward signs and effects. A strange and supernatural instance of which we have in our Saviour, in the sad preliminaries of his passion. The inward chafings and agitations of his struggling soul forcing a way through his body, by a sweat, even of blood, and opening all his veins, by an inward sense of something sharper than the impression of any lance or spear from without. And, generally, in the very course of nature, when a thing lodged, or enclosed any where, breaks forth, it is because it finds no room for an abode within. Outward eruptions are the undoubted arguments of an inward fulness. Nor does this at all contradict what I had said before of such a vehement sorrow's manifesting itself in silence and astonishment ; for that is only at some times, and at some certain degrees, from which it often varies : as even our Saviour himself, while upon the cross, was not yet always crying out. But, besides, even in the midst of this silence, there are other ways, by which such a trouble will sufficiently de-

clare itself to the discernment of an ordinary eye. For, while the tongue is silent, the countenance and conversation may speak aloud; and, when we cannot hear sorrow speak, yet we may hear it groan; and, when it is not to be known by its *voice*, it may be traced by its *tears*. *Shame* and *sorrow*, those twin-children of sin, are seldom deep in the heart, but they are apparent in the face. It is hard to stifle or suppress ~~any~~ natural affection. But this trouble of conscience, as it is above a man's strength to conquer, so it is beyond his art to conceal it. It is scarce possible for a man to lie under the torments of the gout, or the stone, without roaring out his sense of them; but the torments of conscience are as much sharper, and more affecting, than these, as the perceptions of the soul are quicker than those of the body. It is the load upon the heart that gives vociferation to its grief, like the weights of a clock, that cause it to be heard.

Add to this the drooping paleness and dejection of the looks, the mournful cloud upon the brow, the damp and melancholy covering the whole face; all of them the infallible signs of such a grief, as will be sure to discover its *abode* by its *effects*; and such as made Christ himself so doleful a spectacle of misery, as to draw that compassionate exclamation, even from *Pilate*, *John* xix. 5. *Behold the man.* *My moisture*, says *David*, who (as we have observed already) spoke most of these things typically of our Saviour, *is turned into the drought*
of

of summer, Psalm xxxii. 4. His grief had suck'd up all his radical juices; and reduced him even to a skeleton. So that he might well say, in Psalm xxii. 17. *I may tell all my bones; while one might not only stand staring and looking upon him, but through him also.* Such impressions will trouble of conscience make sometimes, even upon the body; all which outward symptoms will be found undeniable arguments of the surpassing greatness of it, even upon this account, that they are sure indications of the excess of any worldly trouble. For how easily may the loss of a friend, or an estate, be read in the countenance! when we are bereaved of our earthly contents, *prorumpunt lacrymæ*; and it is not in our power to stop those floodgates of sorrow.

Now, tho' I must confess that the spiritual sorrow that we have been discoursing of, does not always work over in such sensible, passionate signs, as worldly grief uses to do, and consequently is not certainly, and universally to be measured by them; yet sometimes it has them all, and, if genuine and true, can never be wholly without some of them. And that man who has tears to spend at the memorial of a *lost friend*, but none to shed at the thoughts of a *lost innocence*, a wasted conscience, and a provoked God, has but too much cause to suspect the truth of his sorrow, and the goodness of his heart.

5thly, and lastly, The transcendent greatness of this spiritual trouble may be gathered from

those horrid effects it has had upon persons not upheld under it by Divine Grace. This, indeed, could not be the case of our Saviour; no, not in the greatest height of his passion; God (as I may so speak) supporting him with one arm, while he was smiting him with the other. But the force and activity of every cause is to be discerned, and measured only by its utmost effect. And this trouble of mind actually does its utmost only upon such persons as are abandoned of the forementioned supports of grace. For, in others, whom heaven deals with upon different terms, as soon as it has work'd itself almost up to its fatal crisis, mercy steps in, stanches the bleeding wound, and will not suffer it to *destroy*, where God intends it only to *prove*.

Now, both history and experience testify what tragical ends, men deserted by God, under the troubles of a *wounded spirit*, have been brought into. One man, after he has been grappling with these terrors for some time, has, at length, drowned himself. Another has been so pursued, and wearied with the tormenting thoughts of his sin, that he has sought for an antidote in poison, and even chose to end his grief with his days. Which, surely, are proofs clear enough to evince the insufferable torments of a guilty, enflamed conscience, in persons finally forsaken by God. Nor are those troubles at all less in persons truly pious, during a state of desertion: as may appear from those near approaches, that even such persons, in such

a condition, have made to these dismal outrages upon themselves. For some have been so far left to themselves, as even to intend and resolve upon self-murder; and nothing has been wanting but the last execution. Though they have not actually drowned themselves, yet they have stood pausing upon the brink of destruction; and, tho' they have not used the fatal knife, yet they have prepared it. From whence it is evident, that, for the time, they suffer the same troubles of mind that the wicked do; and that one do not perish under them, as well as the other. It is not because some lie under *a greater* measure of these terrors, and some *a less*; but because, under the same equal proportion, God powerfully *upholds* some, and lets others *fall*.

And thus I have done with the second thing proposed; which was to shew *wherein* the *excessive greatness* of the trouble of a *wounded spirit* manifests itself: I proceed now to the

Third, Which is to shew, *by what ways and means this trouble is brought upon the soul*.

I shall instance in four.

1st, The first is by dreadful reflexions upon the Divine Justice, as provoked. As soon as ever the soul has eaten of the forbidden fruit of sin, the flaming sword of vengeance presently appears: for sin, being, properly, a breach of the law, and the law being under the defence and tuition of God's Justice, the soul cannot reflect upon its sin, but it must also cast its eye upon that which it does essentially relate to, the

law; and, in a violated *law*, it cannot but see an affronted *Lawgiver*. And, in this case, the Divine *Justice* does as naturally catch hold of, and prey upon sin, as a devouring flame does upon flax, or stubble. *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity,* (says *David*) Psalm cxxx. 2. *O Lord, who could stand.* Justice is a plentiful argument of terror, considered by any one that has guilt, and understanding too: for all the calamities in the world, which so afflict and pester mankind, are but the products of *justice*. *Justice*, meeting with sin, is a word, comprising all the evils that God can afflict, or man endure. For, when we view prisons, dungeons, hospitals, those habitations of misery; the general motto and superscription upon them all ought to be *Justice*. It goes about the world, like God's *destroying Angel*, with a sword in its hand: read over all that long black catalogue of curses in *Deut.* xxviii. and they are all but a short essay, or specimen, of that vengeance, that Divine Justice has in reserve for sin; and but a slight foretaste of those pains, that this life, indeed, may begin, but extremity and perpetuity must complete.

But, neither can the miseries of this world, or the next, or both together, represent the justice of God half so terrible to any apprehensive minds, as the sufferings of our Saviour upon the cross. For, if when justice called for satisfaction, God spared not his only son, the son whom he infinitely loved, *Matth.* iii. 17. the son, who pleased him in all things, *John* iv.

34. but gave him up to the most barbarous treatment, that rage and malice could invent; and, after that, to a cruel, ignominious death. What can the conscience of a sinful man find out to skreen itself by, from the same justice appearing against it in vindication of a transgressed law, calling for nothing less in recompence, than the *soul* of the transgressor? Not only conscience, but common sense, must, and will make this dreadful inference; If these things were *done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?* The flame, that could but *scorch* that, *must inevitably consume* this.

2dly, Those wounds are inflicted upon the spirit or conscience by fearful apprehensions of the *Divine Mercy, as abused*. God's justice, we have seen, is of itself sufficiently terrible; but, when mercy, the only thing that should interpose, and ward off the fiery blows of it, is gone, it must needs be intolerable: it must break in upon the soul, like a mighty overbearing torrent, when the bank is down; nothing can oppose or hinder the fury of its progress. *Offended Justice* ministers abundant *reason of fear*; but *abused mercy* seems to cut off all *ground of hope*. For a man to affront him, who is to be *witness in a cause against him*, justly renders the success of it dubious; but, to injure *his advocate*, who alone is to stand between him and his accuser, must, of *doubtful*, make it *desperate*, and deplorable. To sin against mercy, is to sin against our last remedy. For, is there any third attribute in the Divine

Nature, that can save him, who has God's justice for his enemy, and his mercy not for his friend? Is there any thing that can restore that person, who stands lost and bankrupt, both upon the score of law and gospel too? If mercy condemns, what can pardon! But, above all, if the mercies and tenderness of a Saviour, bleeding, suffering, and, at length, giving up his very life a sacrifice for sin, and a ransom for sinners, cannot speak comfort to a *wounded spirit*, must not the wound prove deadly and incurable? And yet, since the benefit of all those sufferings is dealt forth only upon certain conditions, may not the remembrance of some sins justly render the conscience very doubtful, whether a man may plead any interest in them, or not? For, what is Christ upon the cross, to one that will not be *crucified with him*? or, what is a Saviour, dying for sins, to a man that *delights in them*? Can he claim any benefit by that blood, which his conscience is charging him *with the guilt of*?

These are such considerations as cannot but wound and terrify a thoughtful conscience: next to which, in the present case, came in also the stings and remorses of natural ingenuity. A principle that men scarce ever wholly shake off, as long as they carry any thing of human nature about them. And when this shall appear as a *second to conscience* in God's quarrel, and upbraid a man for all his backslidings and apostacies, telling him with the greatest bitterness of taunting reproach, These
are

are the compassions thou hast abused, these are the bowels thou hast kicked against, these the wounds thou hast renewed upon thy Saviour, and this the blood that thou hast trampled upon; reminding him also of the most signal and eminent deliverances vouchsafed him throughout his life, by the same hand of mercy. How that at such a time, under such a distress, when his sin mocked him, and the world despised him, when his heart failed him, and his friends forsook him, yet the goodness of God still stood by him to comfort and support him. How that it delivered him from such a danger, and such an enemy, such a sickness and such a plunge, from which all his own act and reason could never have contrived his escape. How, I say, when the spirit of God shall enliven and stir up those remainders of natural ingenuity in the sinner's breast, thus to expostulate and debate the case with him in the behalf of abused mercy, every such word will pierce like a dagger to his heart, and strike like a dart into his entrails. Common humanity *will* be his *Judge*, and conscience his *Executioner*.

3dly, The spirit comes to be wounded and brought under this extreme anguish by God's withdrawing his presence and the sense of his love from it, as he does sometimes fix a season even from the best of men; *biding himself from those* whom it is impossible for *him* to forsake; which was the very case and condition of our Saviour, making that vehement outcry

outcry under a present apprehension, that God *had forsook him*, and cast off all the tenderness of a father, while he was inflicting upon him such exquisite torments, as one would think it too much for *a father* but *to look upon*. *Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled*, says David, *Psalms xxx. 7.* for all the joy of created beings streams by natural and immediate efflux from the Divine Presence, as that *vital heat* and warmth that animates all things here below, comes by direct emanation from that plentiful *fountain of it, the sun*. And consequently, when a cloud shall interpose between us and the presence of God, the terrors of the law, and the fears of provoked justice and affronted mercy cannot but rush in upon the conscience with a much greater force than at other times. As malignant vapours that infect the air have, after the *sun* is set, and *the light withdrawn*, a much more powerful influence upon it than they can have in the day, God's suspending the light and beams of his countenance, will cause such *a darkness as may be felt*: and even the strictest livers, and most improved christians, are forced to feel the heavy dispiriting damps of it when God deserts them. The ways by which God discovers himself to, and hides himself from the souls of men, are strange and unconceivable; but whenever he does either, the soul is so nearly and sensibly affected with it, that it presently and certainly understands its condition: indeed, as
certainly

certainly as a man finds and feels in himself when he *sickens* and when he *recovers*.

God sometimes writes bitter things against a man, shews him his old sins in all their terrifying crimson circumstances, leaves him in the sad deeps of despair to himself and his own pitiful strengths, to encounter the threats of the law, the assaults of his implacable enemy; in which forlorn estate is not such a one much like a poor traveller losing his way at midnight, and surprized with a violent storm besides? He has darkness round about him, hears nothing but storms and thunder above him, and knows not one step of his way. Such an one is a man deserted by God, whether he looks *inwards or upwards*; nothing but horror and darkness, confusion and mistake attends his condition.

It is reported to be the custom in some countries, that when a judge sits upon the condemnation of a malefactor, there is a curtain drawn before him, so that the condemned person cannot see his judge; and thus it is often *between God and a wounded spirit*. It hears indeed from him a condemning voice, but cannot see his face; and this is horror upon horror, it heightens the condemnation, and makes the sentence of *death sharper* than the *infliction*.

4thly and lastly, These wounding perplexities are brought upon the soul by God's giving commission to the *tempter* more than usually to trouble and disquiet it; for satan is truly

ly and properly the great *troubler of Israel*. He was so even to him *who knew no sin*: for as in our *Saviour's* very entrance into his ministry he tempted him, *Matth. iv.* so towards the close, both of that and his life too, he troubled him: for all that was done by the cruel instruments of his bitter passion, was done by his direct instigation, in *Luke xxii. 53.* *This is your hour, (says Christ) and the power of darkness.* There is a *certain hour, or critical time*, in which God suffers the *powers of darkness* to afflict and vex those that are dearest to him. And if it could be so with one perfectly innocent, how much worse must it needs be, when this mortal enemy of mankind has to deal with sinners? whom it is as natural for him to trouble *for sin*, as to *tempt to it*: and as it is common with him, before sin is committed, to make it appear less in the sinner's eye than really it is, so after the commission, if it be possible, he will represent it *greater*. When God shall leave the computing of our sins to him, where the law writes our debts but fifty, this unjust steward will set down four-score. If the malice of hell, the wit, industry, and importunity of the tempter having such a theme as the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law to enlarge upon, can do any thing, then shall the sinner find, by woful experience, that he could not with more art and earnestness allure to *presumption*, than he can now *terrify into despair*. He that so fawningly enticed the soul to sin, will now as
bitterly

bitterly upbraid it for having sinned. The same hand that laid the bait and the corn to draw the silly fowl into the net, when it is once in, will have its life for coming thither.

Satan never so cruelly insults and plays the tyrant as in this case. If God *casts down* the soul, he will *trample upon it*. He will set a new stamp and name upon every sin. Every *backsliding* shall be total *apostacy*. Every sin against light and knowledge shall be heightened into the sin *against the Holy Ghost*. The conscience shall not be able to produce one argument for itself but he will retort it. If it shall plead former *assurance* of God's favour, from the inward witness of *his spirit*, satan will persuade the soul, that it was but a spirit of *delusion*. If it shall argue an interest in God's promises, from former obedience, as a fruit of that faith that never fails, satan will tell the soul, that it cannot prove its former obedience to have proceeded from such a faith, since even an hypocrite may *go very far*. And lastly, if it would draw comfort from that abundant redemption that the death of Christ offers to all that are truly sensible of their sins, satan will reply, That to such as *by relapsing* into sin have *trampled under foot the blood of the covenant, there remains no further propitiation for sin*. Now, with these and the like rejoinders, will he endeavour to baffle and invalidate all a sinner's pretences to *pardon*. And when God shall not only permit, but, what is more, judicially bid him use his
diabo-

diabolical skill in troubling and vexing *a wounded spirit*, those arguments that of themselves were able to *amaze the heart*, being urged home by such a sophister, will *ever break* and confound it.

And thus I have shewn four several ways by which *the spirit comes to be thus wounded and afflicted*, which was the third thing proposed to be handled. Pass we now to the

Fourth, Which is to shew what is God's end and design in casting men into such a perplexed condition.

Concerning which, as we are to remember that I shew at first that the subject of these excessive heart-wounding troubles were both the *elect* and the *reprobate*, both the *godly* and the *wicked*, so we are to know further, that God has a very different design in bringing these terrors upon each of them. And

1st, For the *wicked or reprobate*. It is evident, that whensoever God brings these into such a condition of horror, it is to them but the beginnings of sorrow, and an entrance into those torments which shall abide upon them *for ever*. It is but the first-fruits of hell, and the earnest of their damnation. But then,

2dly, For the *pious and sincere*. God sometimes brings this anguish upon their spirit for a two-fold end, very different from the former. As

1st, To imbitter sin to them. Nothing does or can leave a more abiding impression upon the mind than misery escaped. He surely cannot

not but remember the battle who is always looking upon his scars. A man, by revoking and recollecting within himself former passages, will be still apt to inculcate these sad memoirs to his conscience. This is that sin *that cost me* so many doubtful distracting thoughts about my eternal condition. This is that sin *that nailed my Saviour to the cross*, that forced the thorns into his head, and thrust the *spear* into his heart; and shall I now, after all this, cast a pleasing eye upon a mortal known experimented mischief? Shall I take that fire into my bosom, that was so likely to have consumed me? Shall I again parley with that serpent that has so often beguiled me?

If the sight of other men's calamities will add a *caution* where it finds *consideration*, should not the remembrance of our own do it much more? Propriety in misery notes it with a lasting character. And this let every one, who wears the name of a christian, know, that he does but *usurp that name*, that can look upon Christ's sufferings otherwise than as his own, or pretend to any benefit from them, without first owning *a propriety in them*. And then, if all those sufferings were but the final consequents of sin, with what heart can that man, who accounts himself really a sharer in them, fall afresh to the commission of those sins, of the direful effects of which he stands convinced by so terrible a demonstration? Certainly, such an one (unless deserted by *humanity*, as well as *religion*,) cannot but continually carry about him

him arguments enough lying close at his heart wherewith to answer, and repel either the most furious or most plausible temptation. He would baffle and cast off the tempter from the very topick of his own malicious methods, and stab and fling back the base proposal in his own face; from this very consideration, that he himself would be the first and fiercest to accuse him for that very sin which he was now enticing him to.

For if God has implanted such a principle of caution in the very *brutes*, from a *mere suggestion of nature*, that the net or the snare, once escaped and got out of, will not easily be entered into again, certainly these mere animals must not be presumed to act more warily from a bare natural instinct, than a regenerate person shall from a principle infused from above. Though the truth is, (one would think) bare nature might be enough to preserve a man in this case: for he who has *but a memory* cannot possibly want arguments against his sin. To consider and reflect will secure *him from a relapse*.

2dly, God's other end in *wounding the spirit* of a truly pious and sincere person, is to endear and enhance the value of *returning mercy*: for nothing can give the soul so high a taste of *mercy* as the consideration of *past mercy*. When a man stands safely landed upon the desired haven, it cannot but be an unspeakable delight to him to reflect upon what he has escaped; they are the dangers of the *sea*,

sea, which commend and set off the pleasures and securities of the *shore*. The passage out of one contrary estate into another, gives us a quicker and more lively sense of that into which we pass; for as when the wicked perish, the remembrance of their former pleasures and enjoyments mightily heightens the apprehensions of their present torments; so when the righteous are re-admitted into fresh assurances of God's favour, all the former sad conflicts they had with the dreadful sense of his wrath serve highly to put a lustre upon *present grace*. A reconcilement after a falling out, a *refreshing spring* after a *sharp winter*, a glorious and triumphant *ascension* after a bitter and a bloody *passion*, are things not only commended by their own native goodness, but also by the extreme malignity of their contraries; things that raise enjoyment into rapture, and common pleasure into *transport* and *extasy*. As that which put a peculiar honour and circle of glory about the head of Christ, was not so much God's exalting and giving him a name, at which all things in heaven and earth should bow, as that he should rise to such a stupendous height of royalty, by a *wretched, infamous, and accursed death*; that from being the scorn of men, he should command the adoration of angels; and from suffering amongst felons and malefactors, ascend far above *principalities and powers*. Such are the astonishing me-

thods of Divine Mercy, where God afflicts with the mind of a father, and *kills* for no other purpose but that he may *raise again*.

In *Psalms* cxxvi. 1, 2. *When the Lord turned the captivity of Sion, (says the psalmist) then were we like to them that dream.* So here in this spiritual deliverance, when a man passes from the agonies and distresses of a *wounded spirit* into a condition of *joy and serenity* of mind, grounded upon a rational hope of God's reconciliation with him, he is so overcome and ravished with delight, that he doubts almost of the reality of what he *sees and feels*, and even questions the truth of *actual fruition*.

And thus much for the *fourth particular* proposed from the words, which was to shew *what God's ends and designs are in casting men into such a perplexed condition.* Pass we now to the

5th and last, Which was to draw some *useful inferences* from the whole. And for this, to prevent both the mistakes of the *weak*, and the misconstructions of the *reverse*, we shall from the foregoing discourse infer these three things by way of caution.

1st, Let no man presume to pronounce any thing scoffingly of the *present*, or severely of the *final estate* of such as he finds exercised with the distracting troubles of a *wounded spirit*. Let not all this seem to thee but an effect of thy brother's *weakness* or *melancholly* :

melancholly : for he who was the *Great and the Holy One*, he whom *God is said to have made strong for himself*, he who was the *Lord mighty to save*, and he who must be *thy Saviour* if ever thou are saved ; even he passed under all these agonies, endured all these *horrors and consternations* ; and to that extremity, that wrath, and death, and hell itself seemed all with one united force to have poured in upon, and took absolute possession of his amazed faculties.

We live in an age of blaspheming all that is sacred, and scoffing at all that is serious : God forgive us for it, and revenge not upon us those uncontrouled *blasphemies and lewdnesses*, which, in the sense of all wise and good men, proclaim us ripe for judgment. But, surely to scoff in this case, over and above the impiety of it, *is cruel, barbarous, and inhuman* ; indeed, more cruel by far, than to jeer a man upon the rack, or under the last *executions* of the most remorseless *justice* ; it is indeed to act over the execrable malice of the *Jews, mocking and flouting* at our Saviour upon the very *cross*. Besides that, it may chance to prove a dangerous piece of raillery, to be passing *jest*s where God is so much *in earnest*, especially since there is no man breathing but carries about him *a sleeping lion* in his bosom, which God can, and may, when he pleases, *rouse up* and let loose upon him, so as to *tear and*

worry him to that degree, that in the very anguish of his soul he shall chuse *death* rather *than life*, and be glad to take sanctuary in a quiet grave. But then further, as this dismal estate of spiritual darkness is a condition by no means to be scoffed at, so neither ought it to represent the person under it to any one as a *reprobate* or *cast-away*. For he who is in this case, is under the immediate hand of God, who alone knows what will be the issue of these his dealings with him. We have seen and shewn, that God may carry on very different designs in the *same dispensation*; and consequently, that no man, from the bare feeling of *God's hand*, can certainly understand *his mind*.

2dly, In the next place, let no *secure sinner* applaud or sooth up himself in the presumed safety of his spiritual estate, because he finds no such trouble or anguish upon *his spirit* for sin. For as the best and most beloved of *God's saints* have lain under this doleful and desponding condition, so, for the most part, the vilest persons breathing have passed their lives freely and jocosely, without the least misgiving or suspicion about their eternal concerns, who yet at length have met with a full payment of wrath and vengeance in the other world for all their *confidence* and *jollity* in this.

It is a common saying and observation in divinity, *That where despair has slain its thousands*

sands, presumption has destroyed its ten thousands. The agonies of the former are indeed more *terrible*, but the securities of the latter not at all less *fatal*. And he who is carried off by a *letbargy* or an *apoplex*, tho' he dies *more easily*, yet he dies *as surely* as he whose soul is forced and fired out of his body by the ragings of a *burning fever*.

The most confident sinner living knows not how soon God may deal with him in this manner; and then the sins that lie still and quiet in his mind for the present, when the fire of God's wrath comes to be applied to them, will be found to be quite other things. It is the very same *water that cools and refreshes* at one time, and that is made to *scald and kill* at another.

All which considered, if any one can be secure in his vice, let him *be secure still*; only let him know, that if ever God thinks fit to *wound his spirit*, and to set the *sense of sin* home to his conscience, it will of the most prophane, daring, and resolved debauchee, make him the most pitiful, abject, broken-minded creature under heaven; and take too fast an hold of his *stout heart*, to be either *beetor'd, or drunk, or droll'd away*.

3dly and lastly, Let no person on the contrary exclude himself from the number of such as are *sincere* and truly *regenerate*, only because he never yet felt any of these *amazing pangs* of conscience for sin. For though

God, out of his unsearchable counsel, is *sometimes* pleased to bring these terrors upon his *saints*, yet in themselves they are not things necessary to make men *such*. God knows the properest ways of bringing every soul to himself; and what he finds *necessary* for one, he does not always judge *fit* for another. No more trouble for sin is necessary to salvation, than so much as is sufficient to take a man off from sin. And if that be once done, he who is troubled for this, that he is not (as he thinks) *troubled enough* for his sins, gives an infallible proof, that he is not in love with them.

And therefore let such persons rather acknowledge the goodness of God towards them, and not quarrel with the great physician of souls, for having cured them by easy and gentle methods. It is the same God who speaks *in thunders and earthquakes* to the hearts of some sinners, and in a *soft still voice* to others. But whether in a *storm* or in a *calm*, in a *cloud*, or in a *sunshine*, he is still that God who will in the end abundantly *speake peace* to all those who with humility and fear depend upon him for it.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N II.

P S A L M XCV. II.

*Unto whom I swear in my wrath,
that they should not enter into my
rest.*

IN these words we have an account of the severest proceeding of an angry God against sinners. What *Calvin* says of reprobation, that it was *decretum horribile*, a dreadful amazing decree, the like may be here said of this sentence pronounced against *Israel*. For certainly, if such decrees are so terrible in the constitution of them, they cannot but appear much more terrible in the promulgation.

We have, in the precedent verses, a narrative of the *Israelites* provoking sins, like a black cloud gathering over their heads, and here we have it breaking out into this dreadful thunder. A thunder much more dreadful than all those that sounded in their ears at

the promulging of the law from *Mount Sinai* : for if the *terror of the Almighty* was so great in giving the law, no wonder if it was much greater in pronouncing the *curse*.

The words in themselves seem very plain and easy ; and by this expression, *I swear in my wrath*, is meant God's peremptory declaring his resolution to destroy those murmuring and rebellious *Jews*. The word *swearing* is very significant, and seems to import these two things :

1st, The *certainty* of the sentence here pronounced. Every word of God both is, and must be truth; but ratified by an oath, it is truth with an advantage. It is signed irrevocable. This fixes it like the laws of the *Medes* and *Persians* beyond all possibility of alteration; and makes God's word like his very nature, unchangeable.

2^{dly}, It imports the *terror* of the sentence, if the children of *Israel* could say, *Let not God speak to us, lest we die*. What would they have said had God then sworn against them? It is terrible to hear an oath from the mouth but of a poor mortal ; but from the mouth of an omnipotent God, it does not only *terrify*, but *confound*. An oath from God is truth delivered in anger. Truth (as I may so speak) *with a vengeance*. When God speaks, it is the creature's duty to hear ; but when he swears, to tremble. As for the next expression, *that they should not enter my rest*,

rest, we must observe, that the word *rest* may have a double interpretation.

1st, It may be taken for a *temporal rest* in *Canaan* the promised land; or 2^{dly}, for an *eternal rest* in the heavenly *Canaan*.

Concerning which, some, who interpret spiritual truths according to the model of their own carnal conceptions, will have the whole sense of these words, to be no more than God's excluding that generation of the *Jews* that murmured, from a temporal possession of the land of *Canaan*, by destroying them in the wilderness. But this does not reach the matter. For since the church of the *Jews*, as to the whole œconomy and design of it, was in every thing *typical*; (so that it is observed by all writers, that there was no dispensation that beset them from God, in respect of any *temporal blessing or curse*, but it did signify and couch under it the same in spirituals.) From the warrant of this rule, we must admit in this scripture, as well as in many others of the like nature, both of a literal, and of a spiritual, or mystical sense. And

1st, Considered according to the *literal* meaning of the words, as they are an historical passage relating to God's cutting off that murmuring generation of the *Jews* in the wilderness, set down in *Numb. xiv. 21, 22, 23.* so questionless they signify only God's denying them an entrance into the temporal

temporal *Canaan*. For to affirm, that all those that fell in the wilderness were excluded from heaven, would be both an harsh and an unwarrantable Interpretation. But then,

2dly, Considered according to the *spiritual or mystical sense* of the words. So the meaning of them runs thus: as God in his fierce anger destroyed many of the children of *Israel* for their murmurings in the wilderness, and so denied them an entrance into the promised land of *Canaan*; so he will eternally destroy all obstinate unbelievers, and for ever exclude them from an enjoyment of a perpetual rest with himself in heaven. This I pitch upon as the prime intendment and sense of the words, though not so as wholly to exclude the other; and I ground it upon the apostle's own interpretation of these words in *Heb. iv. 5*, compared with *Heb. ix. 11*. where he interprets this word *rest*, of such a *rest*, as a man may fall short of through unbelief. But now unbelief does not so much exclude from a *temporal*, as from an *eternal* rest. He applies it also to the *Jews his contemporaries* living in the same age with himself; and those could not possibly be said to miss or fall short of the earthly *Canaan*, since they and their ancestors had possessed that long before. It is clear, therefore, that it is to be understood chiefly of the heavenly.

The

The words thus explained, I shall draw into this one proposition, *viz.*

That God sometimes in this life, upon extraordinary provocations, may, and does inevitably design and seal up obstinate sinners to eternal Destruction.

The prosecution of which I shall manage under these following particulars:

I. I shall shew how and by what means God seals up a sinner to perdition.

II. What sort of obstinate sinners those are that God deals with in this manner.

III. I shall answer and resolve one or two questions that may arise from the foregoing particulars. And

IV. and lastly, Draw some uses from the whole.

Of these in their order.—And

I. For the first of these. There are three ways by which God usually prepares and ripens a sinner for certain destruction.

1st, By withholding the virtue and power of his ordinances: and when God seals up the influences of these conduits, no wonder if the Soul withers and dies with drought. For, alas! what is a conduit by which nothing is conveyed! The ordinances of themselves can do nothing but as they are actuated and enlivened by a secret divine energy working in them. Now God, while he freely dis-

penses them, can suspend the other; and as he can give rain, and yet deny fruitfulness, and even send famine with an harvest, so he can fix such a curse upon the means of grace, that a man may really want them, while he enjoys them; that is, he may want them in their force and power, while he enjoys them in the letter. As a man may eat and yet not be nourished; for it is not the *bread* that nourishes, but the *blessing*. Thus the *Israelites* had leanness in their bones, together with their quails, the hidden nutritive power of the Divine Benediction being withheld. So in spirituals, a man may have an unthriving soul, in the midst of the greatest evangelical provisions, because unblest; and in the midst of such plenty, suffer a real scarcity and famine.

The truth of this will appear from those different effects that are ascribed to the same word in scripture. For, is not that which is a *savour of life* to some; that is, to those that are within the purpose of God's love, and whom he intends effectually to call, and to convert to himself: I say, is not the same termed a *savour of death*, to others? that is, to the obstinate and impenitent, and such as God leaves to themselves. *That*, which God uses as an instrument to save, meeting with the corruption of some obdurate hearts, is made a means to ruin: as it softens some; so it hardens others. The chosen of God are
qualified

qualified by it for glory; the reprobates prepared for wrath. So contrary are the workings of the same principle upon different subjects. As the same rain, that falling upon a tree, or plant, makes it grow and flourish; falling upon wood, cut down, and dry'd, makes it rot and decay. By this means God does very powerfully fit the *sons of perdition* for their final sentence. For, when men grow worse and worse by sermons and sacraments, and under the continual droppings of the word preached, produce nothing but the cursed fruits of sin; like *the earth, that, drinking in the rain, that cometh often upon it, beareth nothing, but briars and thorns*. What can be expected, but that, as they resemble the earth, in its barrenness, so they should be like it also in its doom; which is, *to be nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burnt*, Heb. vi. 8. The apostle draws a peremptory conclusion concerning this, in 2 Cor. iv. 3. *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost*. When the word shall be exhibited to the soul, like a dark-lanthorn, not to display, but to conceal the light; no wonder, *if seeing, we do not see*, but wander through the darkness of a soul-destroying blindness, to such a darkness as is perpetual. God can order even his word and precepts so, and turn them to the destruction of the unprofitable, unworthy enjoyers of them; that, as it is in *Isaiab xxviii. 13. They shall go backward, and be broken, and snared,*

snared, and taken. And, certainly, we have cause to conclude him, who receives no benefit at all by the word of life, a lost person. He, whom the very means of salvation do not save, must needs perish.

2dly, God seals and prepares a sinner for destruction, by restraining the convincing power of his providences. God's providences are subservient to his ordinances: they are (as it were) God's word, acted, and made visible to the eye. For God speaks, not only in his *word*, but also in his *works*. And, as Christ says of his *miraculous*, so we may say also of God's *providential* works; *that the works that he does, bear witness of him.* There are *such* fresh marks and signatures of the Divine Will, in the many occasional passages of our lives, that such as have *their senses*, in any measure *spiritually exercised*, do not only *see the hand*, but also *hear the voice* of him that sent them. And it would not be difficult to draw forth fundry instances from history, shewing, how several persons have been converted by a serious reflection upon some strange passages of providence, that have so directly thwarted, and even melt them in their sin, and withal carry'd with them such undeniable evidence of the Divine Displeasure, that the persons concerned have been forced to cry out, That it was the apparent finger of God; and so to submit to it, by a conscientious reformation of their lives. Now, I shall instance,

instance, in three sorts of providence, in which God often speaks convincingly.

1st, In a general common calamity. In respect of which it is said, *That when God's judgments are abroad in the land, the inhabitants will learn righteousness*, Isaiah xxvi. 9. Now, that which concerns all, concerns every particular. As in a general rain, every twig, every single spire of grass shares in the influence. Judgments that are general in the sending, are to be made particular by a distinct application. Thus *Ezra* and *Nebemiah* made the common desolation and captivity of the *Jews* the subject-matter of their personal sorrow. Thus also *Jeremy*, *Lament.* iii. 1. considers all the words and griefs that were diffused here and there in a common, universal calamity, and then makes them all concenter in his own breast : *I am the man* (says he) *that have seen affliction*. And what is the whole book of the *Lamentations*, but the doleful expression of the sorrows of one man, for the misery of all ? The convincing sense of a calamity should spread wider a great deal than the actual endurance of it, and the terror proceed further than the smart. As the sun-beams, tho' directly and immediately they may strike only this or that thing, yet they are sure to reach many others in the rebound. But now, when God (as it were) blunts the edge of a common calamity, so that it makes no impression, or hardens the heart

heart so, that it admits none, this is a pregnant sign of a soul fitted and prepared for destruction. See the truth of this exemplified in one or two particulars: And first, Could any thing be imagined more impious and absurd, than that which we read in 1 Sam. xv. of *Agag, King of Amaleck*? That immediately upon the conquest of his kingdom, the slaughter of his subjects, and the captivity of his own person, like a man wholly unconcerned in all these distresses, he should venture to adorn and trick up himself, and conclude presently, that *surely the bitterness of death was past*? But behold, even then, in that very moment, sudden destruction rushes in upon him; which (by the way) is then usually nearest to our persons, when furthest from our thoughts. But, to proceed to an higher example of villany: Could there be a more prodigious, horrid instance of incorrigible lewdness, than that in *Numb. xrv. 6.* of one *Zimri*, of whom it is said, that in the very midst, and height of a plague from heaven, raging over the whole camp of *Israel*, he brought into his tent a *Midianitish strumpet* in the sight of *Moses*, his prince, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of *Israel*, who stood weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation? Neither any touch of common humanity, upon the sight of his brethren's mourning and misery, nor any awe and reverence of that great Lawgiver, could

give

give check to his fury; but that, in defiance of the plague, and of the wrath that sent it; in spite of all shame and scandal, and in the face of God, and of the world, he charges on, resolutely and audaciously, to the satisfaction of his impure desires. But wheresoever we meet with such a rate of sinning, we may be sure, destruction cannot be far off, but even at the door. And, accordingly here, in *ver.* 8. we find the vengeance of God overtaking this vile person, by a sudden and disastrous death; a death that carried away body and soul together. For, when men are killed in their sin, *flagrante crimine*, death temporal is by consequence eternal. But now, had these two daring wretches duly and rightly considered these dreadful, publick dispensations of God, they would quickly have reflected upon their own personal danger, and cried out, with surprize and horror, as those *sinners of Sion* did, upon the sight of God's judgments round about them, in *Isaiab xxxiii.* 14. *Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire; who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* This, together with the fears of mature repentance, had been the only sure way to have extinguished them. But persons that will not be concerned, nor moved, nor wrought upon by the loud alarms of God's judgments upon others, are ripening apace for perdition.

2dly, The second sort of convincing providences, is by particular, personal, and distinguishing judgments. When a man is singled out for misery, in the midst of a general prosperity, this, surely, cannot be accounted accident. When God hits one in a company, you may very well conclude, that he aimed at him. Distinction and discrimination was never yet the effect of chance. Now, in every such judgment the voice and command of God is, that we should either begin, or renew our repentance. And when God speaks with his *band*, certainly he speaks most forcibly. But when he binds up, and withholds the healing force of this also, and inflicts *the rod*, but denies *jurisdiction*; and uses that to kill, that was first made to correct; this is another speedy and effectual way to destroy.

Those many rubs and crosses that beset *Saul*, both in his persecution of *David*, and his other affairs, were certainly the voice of God, audible enough to any spiritual ear: and tho' God answered him not by *Urim and Thummim*, yet he spoke aloud to him in vocal blows; which were both reprehensions of what he had done, and admonitions what, for the future, he should do. But, we know, none of all these things had any effect upon him, unless only to make him worse. It appeared to be God's purpose, all along, by a continual increase of guilt and hardness, to
train

train him up for destruction. The event did still demonstrate what God designed him to. The same judgments that in the hand of God are sovereign means to polish and improve a well-disposed mind, are as efficaciously used by him to inflame the accounts of the wicked and the obdurate; who take occasion from thence to make themselves ten times more the sons of reprobation than they were before. As in bodies, those that are solid and excellent, as gold and silver, the more you beat them, the brighter and better they grow: but in flesh, that is presently subject to corrupt, the more you strike it, the blacker and nearer it is to putrefaction. See the desperate resolve that a wretched King of *Israel* made under a pressing judgment, incumbent upon him from God, in 2 *Kings* vi. ver. last: *And he said, Behold, this evil is of the Lord, why should I wait for the Lord any longer?* When a man, instead of being humbled by an evil, is enraged; and, instead of lying at God's feet, flies in his face; we may be sure, that his final judgment and damnation *lingers not*. For, if such works of God, as have in them naturally a convincing quality, do not actually convince; but that the sinner can account *all God's arrows as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of his spear*; we may look upon that man, as one that *hardens himself against God*. And what will prove the issue of such a behaviour is not difficult to conclude, from that

in *Job ix. 4.* *That none ever hardened himself against God, and prospered.*

3dly, The third sort of providences, in which God often speaks convincingly, is by signal, unexpected deliverances. These are both the strongest and the sweetest ways of conviction: they are properly God's *drawing us with the cords of a man*: all perswasion, without any mixture of terror or compulsion: by these, God does (as it were) allure, and even court us into subjection.

Now, all deliverance, in the nature of it, presupposing some evil, from which we are delivered; God first brings us under an evil, that we may see our sin, and then rescues us from perishing by it, that we may repent. He shews us death in the punishment, to affright, and afterwards removes it in the deliverance, to endear the soul. And, surely, upon all the accounts of reason and common humanity, it should be natural from hence to draw an argument for repentance. For, to sin against mercy, shining in a deliverance, is disingenuous; and, since it provokes the judgment to return, equally dangerous. The most proper and genuine deduction, that is to be made from God's *mercy*, is *his fear*, in *Psalms cxxx. 4.* *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* But now, if any man, from a deliverance from punishment, shall draw a consequence for boldness in sin; and if, from compassion, he shall argue him-
self

self into presumption, this is not the discourse of his reason, but the sophistry and baseness of his corruption. And such a way of arguing as God reproached the children of *Israel* for, as equally wicked and irrational, in *Jerem. x. Will ye stand before me, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?* For, can we imagine, that the great and just God should concern himself, to deliver us, and to knock off our shackles, only that we may sin against him so much the more freely? When God has got the sinner upon the advantage, and is making him feel, in some measure, the evil of his sin, in the smart of his punishment, what is it, that makes God, after all this, let him go, and chuse rather to release, than to dispatch him? Is it because he could not destroy him, in justice? or, because it would not stand with the reputation of his goodness? No, assuredly; it was wholly out of free, spontaneous, undeserved mercy, to see whether or no, he will improve such an act of favour into a motive and occasion of amendment. But if, for all this, the sinner will not hear what God speaks in such a dealing; but shuts his eyes, and stops his ears, and, after so many endearments, loves God never the better, nor his sin at all the worse, (as this frame of spirit often befalls sturdy, overgrown sinners,) we may assuredly conclude, that God is taking another course with such an one; and fairly fitting him for the final stroke of his revenging justice.

And thus much for the second way, by which I shew, that God *seals* and *prepares* a sinner for destruction; namely, by *restraining the convincing force of his providences*. The

3^d and last that I shall mention, is by delivering up the sinner to a stupidity, or fearfulness of conscience. And here it will be requisite to shew what this *searedness of conscience* means: which I shall endeavour to explain from that place of scripture, in 1 Tim. iv. 2. *Having their consciences seared with an hot iron*; *καὶ τὸν τῆς συνείδησός τινος ἰσχυρῶς σφραγισμένον*. Where some, by a *seared* conscience, understand a prostitute, branded, filthy conscience; alluding to such notorious criminals, as are branded for their villanies: which, tho' it be in itself a truth, yet others, I think, more significantly, make it an allusion to the practice of surgeons and physicians, who use cuttings and burnings for the healing of corrupt flesh: which being once thus cauterized, or seared, becomes afterwards insensible. And, like such flesh, are the consciences of some men; which are (as it were) seared into a kind of insensibility.

Now, for the nature of conscience, we must know, that it is God's vicegerent in the soul, placed there by him, as superintendent over all our actions, severely to examine and supervise them, and impartially to excuse, or accuse, according to their conformity or inconformity to the rule prescribed by God's law,

law. And it is, withal, naturally, of the tenderest, the quickest, and the most exact sense of any of the faculties; impatient of the least irregularity, and not conniving at the smallest deviation from the rule a man ought to act by.

But now, when this becomes gross, stupid, and insensible, the soul may sin on as it pleases: for, what can hinder sin from reigning, when conscience is hardened, and cannot so much as check it? If, when the watchman is but asleep, the city or castle committed to him is in danger of a surprize from the enemy, how much more must it needs be so, when he is blind? When there is a benumbedness, or searedness, upon the grand principle of spiritual sense, so that, as it is expressed in *Ephes. xix. 4.* we come *to be past feeling*, no wonder then if sin and satan inflict blow after blow, in the most fatal manner, upon the soul: for this is most certain, that, unless we feel the evil of sin, we shall never resist it. Such a conscience will brook and digest the foulest sins. As, when a man has lost his taste, any thing will go down with him.

But still we must here note; that it is not at once, but by degrees, that the conscience comes to be trained on to this insensible, obdurate temper. As first, If a man's conscience will serve him to be worldly, from thence it shall allow him to proceed to ambition and covetousness; and then, following the scent of gain through thick and thin, he

shall be able to mould and cast himself into any kind, even of the wickedest and the basest compliances; and from thence, at last, if need be, he shall not stick at perjury itself. And now, when conscience, by going this cursed round, is become hardy, and the man made an experienced, thorough-paced sinner; what sin will he not dare to commit? Any lye, any oath, any treachery, shall be readily swallowed and digested by him.

But how dangerous, and even desperate, is such a frame of mind! and yet God sometimes delivers up sinners to it; as he did *Pharoah, to hardness of heart*: But how? not by any positive infusion of such an evil habit into the conscience; but by subtracting his grace, as also providentially administering occasions, by which the sinner, thus deprived of grace, is more and more hardened. And, further than this, I see not how any evil or sinful disposition in the creature can be said to be from God. It is sufficient that God effectually works his end upon sinners this way. As the sun is the cause of night and darkness, not by any causal influence producing it, but only by withdrawing his light; the corruption of a man's heart, unrenewed by grace, is the cause of its own hardness: as, when you melt wax, remove but the fire, and the wax will harden itself. But now, there is no way so sure and dreadful, by which God binds over a sinner to death, as this. For thus
God

God dealt with the Jews: He gave them eyes, that seeing, they might not perceive; and ears, that hearing, they might not understand: but made the heart of that people gross, that they might not be converted, and healed; that is, that they might be hardened and ruined; as it is in *Isaiah* vi. 9, 10.

The same appears also from that opposite way that God takes to save. Because God had thoughts of mercy for King *Joshua*, therefore he gave him a tender heart, to relent, upon the hearing of the law, *2 Kings* xxii. 19. *Because thy heart was tender, &c. therefore have I heard thee, saith the Lord.* This hardness growing upon the conscience, is like a film growing upon the eyes; it blinds them. And that which makes the conscience blind to discern its duty, makes it bold to venture upon sin. But, whosoever it is, that God shuts up under such a frame of spirit, that man carries the mark of death about him, and the wrath of God (in all likelihood) abides upon him.

And thus I have done with the first thing proposed; which was to shew, *How, and by what means, God seals up a sinner to perdition:* Come we now to the

II^d, which is to shew, What sort of obstinate sinners those are, that God deals with in this manner: I shall instance in two.

1st, Such as sin against clear and notable warnings from God. Before a sinner comes
to

to have finished his course, if he can but reflect upon, and trace over the several dealings of God's special providence, he will find, that there have been many stops and rubs thrown in his way ; which might have given him fair warning to make a *stand*, at least, if not *to retreat*. For God sometimes hedges in a sinner's way, so that it is really very difficult for him to proceed, and, not only more *safe*, but also more *easy* for him to return. How many men have gone to church, with their hearts fully engaged in a resolution to pursue some secret, beloved sin ; and there have been strongly arrested with the convincing force of some word, so seasonably and (as it were) purposely directed against that sin, that they have thought the preacher to have look'd into their very hearts, and to have been as privy to their most inward thoughts and designs, as their own consciences ? Now, this is a manifest admonition and caution cast in by God himself ; which, to baulk or break through, greatly enhances the sinner's guilt. *Sometimes* God warns a sinner from his course, by making strong impressions upon his mind of its unlawfulness, and contrariety to the Divine Will : which impressions are so strong and cogent, that they overbear all the shifts and carnal reasonings that the subtilty of a wicked heart can make in the behalf of it. *Again*, sometimes God meets the sinner with some heavy threatening

ning sickness, lays him upon the bed of pain and languishing, and scares him with the fears of an approaching death, and the weight of an endless confusion. And then he pleads with him, opens the book of conscience, and sets before him his sins, represented with all their killing circumstances, and dismal appearances, together with their hideous, destructive consequences in the everlasting endurance of an infinite wrath. In which case, (as the condition of *sickness* and *danger* is usually a relenting condition) so, no doubt, but, at that time, glorious designs of repentance are took up by the sinner. But, as soon as he is released of his sickness, he quickly grows sick of his repentance; and, as the *Roman* orator says, *Timor non diuturni magister officii*: nothing is more common, than for the violences of fear to return to the inclinations of nature. Possibly, after all this, God meets the sinner again, scatters his estate, makes a breach upon his reputation, and so disciplines him with poverty and disgrace, 'till, at length, he resumes his forgot repentances, and recovers himself into soberer thoughts and severer principles.

These are the methods, that, for the most part, God takes to reduce obstinate sinners. But yet, there both have been, and still are men in the world deeply engaged, and (as it were) fixed and riveted in their sins, notwithstanding all these, and the like admonitions. But, who-

whosoever they are, that can frustrate and defeat all these arts and attempts of grace for the recalling of sinners, you may write them hopeless: for, where admonition cannot enter, nothing but death and *destruction* can.

2dly, The other sort of sinners, are such as sin against special renewed vows, and promises of obedience made to God. This is not only to break God's bonds, laid upon us in conviction, but also those bonds and ties that we have laid upon ourselves, by our own voluntary protestations. A vow, or promise, is the most binding thing that can limit, or restrain a free agent. And from mere natural principles, men generally bear such a reverence to them, that they must be far gone in a contempt of nature, as well as religion, before they can wholly break, or cast them off. For, if these cannot bind, corruption must needs be boundless. Solomon gives us an excellent admonition in *Eccles. v. 4. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for God hath no pleasure in fools.* Where we may observe, that he supposes, that men are not of such prostitute consciences, as wholly to deny the performance of a vow; and therefore he fastens folly and wickedness upon the very delay of it. And, if so, what *can* we think that he would have said to a downright breach of a vow? and that in a matter of such indispensable necessity, as obedience? To break it here, is therefore so transcendently wicked,

wicked, because this was due upon the account of *God's law*, before, and without our promise. It obliged, of itself, as *a duty*; but a vow or solemn promise, superadded, sets home duty with a further obligation.

Moreover, the violation of these is more than ordinary sinful; not only from the necessity of the matter, to which they oblige, but also from the occasion, upon which they were made. For men seldom make such vows, but upon extraordinary cases; as upon the receipt of some great endearing mercy, or some notable deliverance; which causes them, by way of gratitude, to bind themselves to God in closer and stricter bonds of obedience. Whereupon, such as make a custom of affronting God, by a frequent and familiar breach of these, are justly very odious to him, and, from odious, quickly become unsupportable.

Where sin is grown inveterate, and the sinner unconquerable, so that he can endure no restraint, nothing can hold him; but, like the man possessed with a legion of devils, he breaks all chains and fetters, that have been cast upon him: we may be confident that evil is designed for him: he stands as a condemned person before God already. God has pronounced his doom. And, tho' he has frequently broke promise with God, yet, in this thing, he shall find, that God will certainly keep his word with him.

And

And thus much for the second thing proposed ; which was to shew, *What sort of obstinate sinners those are, that God seals up to destruction* : I come now to the

III^d, Which is to answer and resolve two questions that may arise from the foregoing particulars.

1st, Whether the purpose of God passed upon an obstinate sinner, (here expressed to us by *God's swearing against him*) be absolutely irrevocable ?

2^{dly}, Whether a man may know such a purpose to have passed upon him antecedently to its execution.

For the first of these, I affirm, that the scripture is full and clear for it. As for instance ; God unalterably proposed the taking away the kingdom from *Saul* : of which purpose *Samuel* speaks thus, in *1 Sam. xv. 29.* *The Strength of Israel* (says he) *is not a man, that he should repent* : where, by *repenting*, is meant only God's altering his counsel, or reversing his purpose.

And now, if God may pass such a purpose upon a man, with reference to his temporal estate, why may he not also, with reference to his eternal ? Since the motive inducing God to one (which is the high malignity of sin) may be advanced to such a degree of provocation, as equally to induce him to the other ; especially, since the difference of the subject,

subject, *viz.* that one is about a temporal, the other about an eternal estate, does not at all alter the nature of the action. For, is it any ways strange in reason, absurd in divinity, or, indeed, in any respect derogatory, even to the Divine Goodness itself, *for God, upon unusual sins*, frequently repeated, pertinaciously continued in, and beset with circumstances of the highest aggravation and defiance, to take up a purpose concerning such a person, certainly to exclude him from salvation? This is so suitable, even to the most just and equal transactions between man and man, that I find no paradox to assert it, in respect of God's dealings, at all.

But some, perhaps, will urge: Suppose such an one should repent, change his life, and break off his sins, by a sincere and constant devoting of himself to the duty of piety and mortification, would the purpose of God stand still in force against such an one?

I answer, No; but I add, withal, that this, in the present case, is both an improper and an impossible supposition: for, supposing that God once commences such a purpose against any sinner, he always with-holds and denies that grace which should render the means of repentance effectual, after that: so that it is certain, that such an one will never have *a will*, or *an heart* to repent and turn from his sins. And therefore, in the foregoing discourse, I shew, that God puts
this

this purpose in execution, chiefly, by withdrawing the secret converting energy of his word: for, to me it seems clear, that the word does not convert, by any meer *suasive* force, naturally inherent in it; but, by a Divine Power concomitant to, and co-operating with it. It being otherwise hard to imagine, how a man can be barely persuaded out of his nature, or, at least, out of that, which sways him as strongly. I shew also, that God took away the convincing edge and impression of his providences; so that they never became effectual to reduce such an one.

From all which it follows, that upon these grounds the foregoing question is impertinent. For, tho' God promises salvation upon a certain condition; yet, if he alone, by his grace, is able to effect that condition, and, upon great provocation, refuses to effect it; it is evident, that he may, upon failure of that condition, irreversibly purpose to condemn a sinner, and yet stand firm to the truth of his former promise.

This is most certain; That both these propositions may, and are, and must be unalterably true; namely, *That whosoever repents, and leaves his sins, shall be saved*; and yet, *That he, whosoever God has sworn shall never enter into his rest, can never enter into it*: And all pretences to the contrary, are but harangue, and declamation, and fit to move none, but such as understand not the strength
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of arguments, or the force of propositions. And thus much in answer to the first question. The second is, Whether a man may know such a purpose to have passed upon him, antecedently to its execution?

In answer to which, we must observe, that the ordinary ways, by which God imparts the knowledge of his will to men, are only these two ;

1st, God's declaration of it, by his word.

2^{dly}, Men's collection of it from its effects.

Now, for the first of these, I shall lay down this assertion : That every peremptory and absolute declaration of something to be done by God, does not always infer God's absolute purpose to do that thing, as to the event of it.

The due consideration of which is of so great moment, that, without it, we cannot rightly understand many of the promises and threatnings of God, which run in terms absolute and peremptory, and yet never come to be fulfilled. As for instance ; in that first great threatening made to *Adam* in *Gen. ii. 17.* *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die ;* we find, that the execution did not reach the letter of the denunciation : forasmuch as *Adam* long survived the violation of that precept, to which this threatening was annexed.

And then, in the next place, for promises. Let us take that eminent one made by God to *Elijah*, in 1 *Sam.* ii. 30. where God repeats his own promise in terms very absolute: *Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said, indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever; yet he adds in the very next words, Far be it from me.* Strange! that when God had promised a thing absolutely, he should add afterwards, *Far be it from me*, to perform it. How are these things reconcileable to, and consistent with his immutable truth and veracity? For the explication of which,

1st, We must observe, first particularly, concerning God's *threatenings*; that frequently they do not signify the *event* of the thing threatened, but sometimes declare only the *merit* of the action and the will of God, that such a punishment should be *due* to such an offence; not that it should be *eventually insisted* for it: so that those words in *Genesis* signify only thus much, *In the day that thou eatest, thou shalt certainly be obnoxious and liable to death*: and so *Adam* really was, and might have been proceeded against according to the tenor of that sentence, had God been pleased to take him upon the advantage.

2^{dly}, We must observe jointly both Promises and Threatenings, that they often run in absolute Terms, when really they imply

ply a condition. So that the promise made to *Eli* and *his family*, implied the condition of their obedience, and pious behaviour towards God; which failing, and the promises thereupon not being performed, it appeared, that however in words it was absolute, yet in sense and design it was but conditional. From all which I affirm, that promises and threatenings, tho' expressed in never such absolute terms, yet cannot be known to be absolute or conditional, till such time as they are put in execution. And yet therefore upon this ground no sinner can conclude that God has took up such a purpose against him, till he finds it actually fulfilled upon him. To which I add further, that God, now a-days, makes no such declaration of his purposes to any particular persons.

In the next place then, if any will pretend to gather the knowledge of such a purpose of God against him, it must be from some effects of it. Such, as I shew, were God's withdrawing his grace, and that secret convincing power that operates in his word, and in his providences: but this cannot immediately be known by any man; since it is (as we here suppose it to be) *altogether* secret. Or, further, he must gather this knowledge from some qualifications, or signs, accompanying those persons that are in such a wretched condition. Such, as I shew, were sinning against particular warnings and admonitions from
F 2 God;

God; as also against frequently renewed vows and promises of amendment and obedience. *But* these I mentioned not as certain, infallible marks of such a forlorn estate, but only as shrewd signs of it. For besides that, the scripture declares no man absolutely and finally lost, as soon as these qualifications are found upon him, unless they continue so till his death. So it is further manifest, that the grace of God is so strange and various, in its working upon the heart of men, that it sometimes fastens upon and converts old overgrown sinners, such, as to the eye of reason, were going apace to hell, and almost at their journey's end.

From all which it follows, that no man, in this life, can pass any certain judgment concerning the will of God, in reference to his own final estate; but ought, with fear and trembling, to attend God's precept and revealed will; and so gathering the best evidence he can of his *condition*, from his *obedience*, with all humility to expect the issue of God's great counsels and intentions.

But here, to prevent all mistakes about what has been said, you must observe, that there is a wide difference between the *purpose* of God, that I have been hitherto discoursing of, and that which the schools call God's *decree of reprobation*; concerning which I shall only remark this by the way. That there is so much to be argued, both from scripture
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and reason, grounded upon the *actuality* and *immutability* of the Divine Nature for it; and so much, on the contrary, from the difficulty of its seeming to some to make God the author of sin, and to cross some received principles of morality, to be urged against it, that had not authority most wisely and justly restrained all discourses of it from the pulpit, I think none could shew a better understanding of it, than by not presuming to determine any thing about it. And therefore my business rather is, only in a word or two to shew, that the *purpose of God*, that I have been hitherto speaking of, is quite another thing from *that decree* considered according to the hypothesis of the schools, and that in a double respect.

1st, Because that decree is said to commence entirely upon God's good pleasure and sovereign will, and not upon any compulsive cause from without him: but this *purpose* commences upon the provocation of the sinner, as an impulsive cause moving God to make such a determination against him.

2^{dly}, Because that decree is said to be from all eternity; but this purpose is actually took up in time; namely, after some signal provocation. And because the schools will not admit of any new immanent acts, new purposes or decrees in God; therefore I call it a *purpose* only in a large and popular sense: for indeed, in strictness of speech, it is properly but an *effect of God's will*, actually disposing

sing the sinner under such circumstances, as meeting with his corruption, will certainly end in his perdition.

And thus having cleared these two questions, which was the third thing proposed to be handled, I descend now to the 4th, and last, which is to draw some uses from the whole. And the

1st, Shall be of exhortation, to exhort and persuade all such as know how to value the great things that concern their peace, to beware of sinning under sin-aggravating circumstances. What those are, you may know by recollecting, in your meditations, what has been delivered. It is wonderful to consider what weight a bare circumstance gives to sin, and what a vast and wide disparity it makes between actions of the same nature. What is the reason that the same sin does not actually fetch down wrath upon one, when it strikes another with an immediate vengeance, but because in one it is empoisoned with more killing circumstances than in the other? Now we are to know, that the things that chiefly provoke God to swear against men, are judgments, mercies, means of grace, warnings and convictions; these are the things, that, neglected, double and treble the guilt of sins, and of damnable, make them actually condemning. These are the fair days that ripen us apace for the sickle of sin-revenging justice. It is said of the times

times of heathenism, in *Acts* xvii. 30. *That God winked at them*; what was the reason? Certainly their sins, as to the nature and kind of them, were as black, hideous, and provoking, and struck as high as the highest improvement of natural corruption could reach. Why then, cannot God wink also at the same sins now under the gospel? Why! because as the gospel offers grace to sinners, so it adds guilt and greatness to sin. A dung-hill under the hot sunshine is much more offensive than under the shade.

As men, therefore, fear falling under that terrible sentence expressed in the words, as they dread a final unappeasable anger, let them shun these sin-heightening Aggravations; and beware of sinning against judgments and deliverances, gospel light, clear warnings, and strong convictions. For can we in reason imagine, that that great and universal Providence that takes cognizance of every the least accident, and reckons *every hair that falls from our head*, should not have some great and particular designs upon the souls of men in the several strange and unusual passages of their lives? Neither God's words nor his works can be frustrate. He neither discourses nor fights with the air. And therefore, in the strength and evidence of what I have laid down, I must affirm, that that person, whosoever he is, whom the continual returns of the word preached does not alter; but that his old

fins continue firm, entire, and unbattered; the baseness of his inclinations unchanged: so that after all his attendance upon the word, his tongue and thoughts are as loose to all filthiness, to all levity of discourse and behaviour, as before. He also, whose former distresses, hardships, and disasters have not laid him low in the valleys of humility, nor circumscribed the lashings out of his luxury, but that his *past miseries and restraints* give only a relish instead of a check to his present pride and intemperance. And lastly, he whom all the caresses and embraces of Providence have not been able to win upon, so as to endear him to a virtuous strictness, or to deter him from a vicious extravagance, I say, every such person, (unless the great God be trivial and without concern in his grand transactions with our immortal souls,) during this condition, is (so far as we can judge) a fashioning for wrath. He is a probationer for hell, and carries about him the desperate symptoms and plague-tokens of a person likely to *be sworn against by God, and hastening apace* to a sad eternity.

The other use and improvement of the foregoing particulars, shall be to convince us of the great and fearful danger of a daring continuance in a course of sin. The counsel of *Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar*, carries an equal aspect upon us all; that *we break off our sins by righteousness, and change*
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our lives by an immediate repentance : for who knows what dreadful things may be forming in the mind of God against us, during our impenitence ? Who knows what a Day may bring forth ? And what may be the danger of one hour's delay ? This is most sure, that every particular repeated act of sin, sets us one advance nearer to hell. And while we are sinning obstinately, and going on audaciously in a rebellious course, how can we tell but God may *swear in his wrath against us*, and register our names in the black rolls of damnation ? And then our condition is sealed and determined for ever.

It is dangerous dallying with, and venturing upon the Almighty. God is indeed merciful, but we know mercy itself may *be angry*, and compassion provoked *may swear our destruction*. Every sinner, upon his return to God, should repent and believe with that confidence, as if God were nothing but mercy ; but having once repented, it would be his wisdom to live with that caution and exactness, as if God were nothing but justice. For none certainly can be too exact in acquitting himself to God, or too cautious in the business of eternity. And therefore when the tempter shall dress up any beloved minion sin, and present it to our eager inflamed appetites, let us not look upon it, as it paints and sparkles in the temptation ; but let us rather demur a while, and debate with
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our selves, what may be the issue of that sin, if committed by us, in the court of heaven; whether it may not provoke God, to protest, that we shall never come thither: and then believe it, God will say, as he does in *Isaiah* xlv. 23. *I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and it shall not return.* What God absolutely purposes and declares, God himself cannot, (because he will not) disannul. Still, therefore, let us keep this consideration alive upon our spirits, that before the sentence of death pass upon us, it may fairly be prevented; but when it is once denounced, it can never be recalled. God in mercy give us a right understanding of these things.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N — III.

P S A L M xiv. 1. first Part.

*The fool hath said in his heart, There
is no God. —*

THAT any one should degenerate to that degree of unreasonable baseness, as to deny that Being and Power, by which he breathes, is not easy to imagine, did not some force us to believe so much of them upon their own word. Such as history tells us were *Diagoras Melius, Theodorus Cyrenæus*, and the like : and we have no cause to have so much better an opinion of the modern age, as to doubt that it has those who are ready enough to let fly and vent the same impiety. Tho', let them affirm it never so much in words, there are not wanting arguments to persuade us, that their mouth belies their heart ; and that they have an inward, invincible sense of what they outwardly renounce,

holding

holding them under the iron bands of a conviction not to be stifled or outbraved, or hector'd out of their conscience ; as shall be discours'd of afterwards.

In the words we have these two particulars :

I. An assertion made ; *There is no God.*

II. The person by whom it is made ; *the fool.*

As for the assertion, we may consider in it two things ; first, the thing asserted : second, the manner of its assertion.

As for the thing asserted ; that, *There is no God* ; it may be understood,

1st, Either, first, of an absolute removal of the Divine Being and Existence : that there is no such spiritual, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent nature, as we call God ; but that the world is of itself ; and that there is nothing else distinct from it. This is the highest degree of asserting, that there is no God.

2^{dly}, It may be understood of a removal of God's providence, by which he governs and takes account of all the particular affairs of the world ; and more especially of the lives and actions of men, so as to reward, or punish them according as they are good and evil. This is a lower degree of atheism ; but has altogether as masculine an influence upon the manners and practices of men, as the former ; and perhaps, upon a due improvement of consequences, will be found to end in it.

Epicurus

Epicurus was of this opinion. He confessed that there was a God ; but as for his interposing, or concerning himself in our affairs here below, this he utterly denied, and that for a reason as absurd as his assertion was impious ; namely, that it would disturb his ease, and consequently interrupt his felicity, to superintend over our many little and perplexed businesses.

Now, I suppose, the text may be understood equally of both these senses : and accordingly I shall so take it in the ensuing discourse.

2dly, The next thing is the manner of the assertion ; *The fool bath said in his heart*. It wears the badge of guilt, privacy, and darkness ; and, as if it were sensible of the treason it carries in its bowels, it hides its head, and dares not own itself in the face of the sun and of the world. Atheism is too conscious to be venturous and open : that is the property of truth, the daughter of the light, and of the day. It is not the nature of this ill thing, to display itself in words, and to summons profelytes upon the market-place. It will not hang up a flag of defiance against God, and cry out, *Hear, O heaven, and hearken, O earth*, There is no such thing as a maker and governor of the universe ; it is all but a crafty invention of statesmen, priests and politicians, to bring mankind to their lure, and to bind the bonds of government faster upon societies.

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No; the atheist is too wise in his generation, to make remonstrances and declarations of what he thinks. His tongue shall keep the track of the common and received way of discoursing; and, perhaps, his interest may sometimes carry him so far, as to disguise his behaviour with zeal for the assertion of those things, which his belief is a stranger to. It is his heart, and the little council that is held there, that is only privy to his monstrous opinions. There it is that he dethrones his Maker, and deposes conscience from its government and vicegerency. For here, he knows, he may think, and think freely, and uncontrolably; since there is no casement in his bosom, no listening hole in his heart, from which the informer may catch, and carry away a guilty thought.

He that would see the stage, upon which human liberty acts entirely, and to the utmost, must retreat into his heart, and there he shall see a principle, absolute and unshackled, and not framed into any demureness, and assumed postures of virtue and gravity, from the awe of men's eye and observation, which, instead of the man, exhibits only a dress to the spectator. He shall find his heart bold enough to question the laws he bows to; to examine the first principles, that in his profession lie sacred and untouched; to ransack and look into foundations; and, in a word, to think as he pleases, while he speaks and does as he is commanded.

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It will now concern us to enquire a little, what is meant and implied by the fool's saying in his heart that *there is no God*.

I conceive it may imply these following things :

1st, An inward wishing, that there was no God. There is nothing more properly the language of the heart, than a wish. It is the thirst and egress of it, after some wanted, but desired object. The atheist first pleases his contemplation, with the supposition of that free range, that he might take in all the gardens of pleasure, if there were no superior eye to supervise and judge him. And, how baave a thing it were to have the entertainments of a feast every day, and no reckoning brought up in the rear of them ! To be voluptuous, and yet unaccountable ! To be lord and master, and supreme in his choice, and to obey nothing but his own appetites !

These reflexions fill his fancy with glistring imaginations : And the man cannot hold, but wish that troublesome thing, the Deity, that so sowers and thwarts his contents, removed and wholly took out of the way ; than which there cannot be a thought of an higher malignity, and a more daring venom. For he that wishes a thing, would certainly effect it, if it were in his power. He that would have no God, is full of indignation that there is one ; and, according to the poet's fable of the giants attempting to scale heaven,

ven, and to fight with the gods ; so would he ascend, and ravish the scepter from the hands of Omnipotence, nestle himself in the government of the world, and, like lucifer, place himself higher than the Most High.

Now, it is probable, that God punishes the wish, as much as he does the actual performance : for what is performance, but a wish, perfected with a power : and what is a wish, but a desire, wanting opportunity of action ; a desire sticking in the birth, and miscarrying for lack of strength and favourable circumstances to bring it into the world. Certain it is, that wishes discover the most genuine and natural temper of the soul ; for no man is more heartily himself, than he is in these.

They are, indeed, the chief weapons with which atheism can strike at the Deity : for the wickedness and malice of man cannot make any change in God. It cannot shake any of these solid felicities, that the Divine Nature is possessed of. The atheist can only wish, and would, and desire ; that is, with the snake he can hiss, and shew his poison ; but it is not in his power to be mischievous any further.

2dly, The fool's saying in his heart, that *there is no God*, implies his seeking out arguments to perswade himself that there is none. Where the heart is concerned, it will quickly employ the head ; and reason shall be put to the drudgery of humouring a depraved mind,
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by providing it with a suitable hypothesis. The invention must be set a-work to hammer out something that may sit easy upon an atheistical disposition.

Hereupon the mind begins to boggle at immaterial substances, as things paradoxical and incomprehensible. It brings itself, by degrees, to measure all by sense; and to admit of nothing, but as it is conveyed and vouch-ed by the judgment of the eye, the ear, and the touch. A being purely spiritual shall be flouted at, as a chimera, and a subtile nothing.

Besides, men see all things still continue in the same posture, and proceed in the same course; which makes them question, whether there be any over-ruling, governing Being, distinct from that visible frame of things, that is always in their view. As those scoffers in *St. Peter*, question'd the future judgment, upon the sight of the constant, unchanged tenor of things, *2 Peter iii. 4. Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation.*

They will declaim against a Deity also from this, that they think all human affairs proceed by chance and accident, and great disorder; and consequently are not under the disposal or management of any superior understanding, that may be presumed to regulate and take cognizance of them. They see pi-

ous men afflicted, and the wicked exalted; the oppressor triumphing and cloathing himself with the spoils of oppressed innocence and humility. They observe, that virtue is no step to wealth, or honour; and that conscience is but an hindrance, and a strap to greatness. And, perhaps also, they find by experience in themselves, that they never thrived so well, as when they acted freely and boldly, and without the controul of rules; when they unshackled themselves from the niceties and punctilio's of that fruitless, unprofitable thing, called sincerity.

And these considerations may well be thought so much the more prevalent working in a corrupt breast, since we read, that they have made no small impressiion, even upon the most excellent and sanctified persons: they staggered such heroes in the faith, as *David*, *Jeremy*, and the like: they engaged them in a dispute with God himself about the justice and equality of his actings: they changed them, from believers, into disputants; and made them undertake their Maker for their opponent. Now, what the pious and the faithful may *doubt of*, the atheist may well be thought to *deny*. And no question but he puts his wits upon the wrack, and uses all the art, learning and industry he is master of, to rid himself of the belief of a God; a God that governs, and will hereafter judge the world. The thought of which cannot but be

be a perpetual check and allay to the revels of the epicure : and consequently must needs put him to relieve himself, by the best shifts he can, to conjure down the terrors of his mind, and to drown the clamours and threatenings of his conscience ; which, as long as he acknowledges a deity, will be sure to torment him with a secret, unsupportable sting.

3dly, For the fool to say in his heart, *There is no God*, implies not only a seeking for reasons and arguments, but also a marvellous readiness to acquiesce in any seeming probability or appearance of reason that may make for his opinion. Which is a sure demonstration of a mind desperately in love with a notion, and yet suspicious and indifferent of the truth of it. It is a sign that a man is falling, when he catches at straws, and every little nothing to support him. The atheist, who is so rigid an exactor of evidence and demonstration for the proof of those points that he rejects, yet with the most impudent and unreasonable partiality, produces no such thing, but only remote, pitiful, precarious conjectures, for the assertion and defence of his own infidelity.

As for instance, how weak and slight were all the foregoing exceptions alledged in his behalf ! His first cavil, produced against immaterial substances ; concerning which, can the atheist prove that it implies any contradiction or absurdity, that there should be such sub-

stances, such natures as fall not under the cognizance of outward sense? Is there any solid argument to overthrow this? If there be; whence is it, that none of the philosophers have been hitherto able to assign such an one; and solidly to evince, as well as magisterially to assert, that all substance includes in it the dimensions of quantity; and consequently, that substance and body are but terms equivalent?

And then, for the other exception, drawn from the prosperity of the wicked, and the present afflictions of the godly and virtuous: Is there any such disorder or injustice in this, when the assertors of Providence assert also a future estate of retribution in another world? Where the present sense of things shall be vastly and universally changed; and the epicure shall pass from his baths, and his beds of roses, into a bed of flames; and the poor, distressed saint be translated from his prison and his oppressors, into joys, pleasures, and glories that are unspeakable. *It may* be replied, that the atheist believes no such thing: but, whether he does, or no, it is not material, as to our present business, which is only to prove the reasonableness of God's dealing with the wicked and the just, in this world, upon supposition of the truth of this principle; which it has not been in the power of any atheist yet to shake, or to disprove; and, for the present, falls not under this discourse.

Athly,

4^{thly} and lastly, To mention yet another way, different from all the former : For a man to place his sole dependance, as to his chief good and happiness, on any thing besides God, is (as we may so speak) virtually, and by consequence, for him to say in his heart, *There is no God*. It is, indeed, the voice of a man's actions, the direct affirmation of his life ; for, while a man expects that from the creature, which every created being can only have, and consequently ought only to expect from its creator, it is a practical, and (in its kind) a loud denial of a God ; inasmuch as in this case, a man so behaves himself, as if really there were none : and therefore in scripture is most emphatically stiled, a living without God in the world.

Which, tho' it does not always include a direct denial of the Divine Existence, yet, so far as the acknowledgment of that ought to influence the life, the impiety of it is the very same, and the absurdity greater. For, grant but the speculative atheist his supposition, and principle, *that there is no Deity or Providence*, and he cannot be charged with any great unreasonableness of proceeding, for his giving way to all his appetites and lusts in the prosecution of their respective excesses, and irregular gratifications. But for a man, who has not paved his way to such a licence of acting, by a life of the same principle, but who owns in his mind a clear and a standing perswasion

of the being of a Supreme Maker, Judge, and Governor of the world, yet to trample upon all rules and laws prescribed for the regulation of his behaviour towards this his Maker, and to give himself wholly over to the dictates of his unbridled passions and affections; this assuredly is the height of folly; it is the granting of the antecedent in the judgment, and the denial of the consequence in the practice.

That man who places all his confidence, hope, and comfort, in his estate, his friend, or greatness, so that upon the failure of any of these, his heart sinks, and he utterly desponds as to all enjoyment or apprehension of any good or felicity to be enjoyed by man, does as really deify his estate, his friend, and his greatness, as if in direct terms he should say to each of them, *Thou art my God*; and should rear an altar or a temple to them, and worship before them in the humblest adoration: nay, it is much more: since God looks upon himself as treated more like a Deity, by being loved, confided in, and depended upon, than if a man should throng his temple with an whole hecatomb, sacrifice thousands of rams, and pour ten thousand rivers of oil upon his altars.

Let every man, therefore, lay his hand upon his heart, and consider with himself, what that thing is that wholly takes it up and commands it as to all its affections, and let him know, that *that thing*, whatsoever it be,

be, *is his God*; and that God really so accounts of it: and consequently, that it is possible for a man to *say in his heart, that there is no God*, though he neither blasphemes, or denies his being, nor divests him of his providence, and government of the world.

And thus much for the first thing, the assertion, *that there is no God*. I come now to the second, namely, the author of this assertion, who the text tells us is the *fool*, and his folly will be made to appear from these following reasons:

1st, That such an one, in making and holding this assertion, contradicts the general judgment and notion of mankind. He opposes his drop to the ocean, his little forced opinion to the torrent of universal, natural instinct, that infused this persuasion into every one before his first milk. It is a notion, that a man is not catechised but born into: his mother's womb was the school he learned it in. It sticks to him like a piece of his essence, and his very being is the argument that enforces it.

Hereupon it has possessed and spread itself into all nations, all languages, all societies and corporations: nor was it ever known, that any company of men constantly owned the denial of a Deity. Many nations have indeed foully erred, and abused their reason in the particular choice of a God, or rather of the worship of God. For I very believe,

that when the *Aegyptians*, and others, worshipped this thing or that, they designed to worship the Supreme Being, as manifesting some effect of his power or goodness by that thing. I say, though the nations perverted themselves by idolatry, yet the general notion and acknowledgment of a Deity remained entire amongst them. So that the contrary opinion of the atheist is not so much *confuted* as *overwhelmed*. And there is no man that can rationally profess himself an *atheist*, but must also profess himself wiser than the whole world; oppose his single ratiocination to the ratiocination of all mankind: but surely, the match will be found marvellous, unequal, and the vast disparity of the very number will be an unanswerable presumption against him. For what can he be thought to find out, or discern more, than so many millions of the subtlest, and most improved wits, every one of which was, perhaps, of a quicker apprehension, and a further reach than himself?

It is morally impossible for any falsity to be universally received and believed, both as to all times and places; and therefore an *atheist* appears in the world, as a strange unusual thing, as an irregularity, and exception from the standing rules of nature; like a man born without legs or arms; or, indeed, rather without an head, or an *heart*.

2dly, The folly of such a person appears in this, that he lays aside a principle easy and suitable to reason, and substitutes in the room of it, one strange and harsh; and, at the best, highly improbable. For is it not most suitable to reason, there being a necessity of a first mover, a thing granted by all; that an intelligent nature of a substance above the grossness of body, infinite in wisdom, power, goodness, and all other perfections, should first of all contrive and give being to this fabrick of the world, and afterwards preserve, govern, and order every thing in it to his wise and righteous purposes? Is there any thing (I say) in this, that an unprejudiced reason does not immediately close or fall in with, as that that is fairly consistent with all its principles and graces upon none of them?

But the *atheist* that puffs at this, and lays it wholly aside, what does *he* resolve the phenomena of nature into? How come we by this world, according to his philosophy? Why; he either tells us, that it was from eternity; a strange (though much the most rational) hypothesis that he can frame. For if it has existed from all eternity, whence is it that we have no history or record of any thing beyond a little above five thousand years? How come the transactions of so many myriads of years to be swallowed up in such deep silence and oblivion? And as for the
story

story even of those five thousand years, we are beholding to the scriptures for it; for all prophane histories set out from a much later date: so that this hypothesis is hugely improbable, and unfit for any rational man to build his discourse, much less to venture his salvation upon.

But if this will not do, we are told, that there was an infinite innumerable company of little bodies, called atoms, from all eternity, flying and roving about in a void space, which at length hitched together and united; by which union and connection, they grew at length into this beautiful, curious, and most exact structure of the universe.

A conceit fitter for *Bedlam* than a school, or an academy; and took up (as it were) in direct opposition to common sense and experience. For, let any one take a vessel full of sand or dust, and shake it from one end of the year to the other, and see whether ever it will fall into the figure of an horse, an eagle, or a fish: or, let any one shake ten thousand letters together, till by some lucky shake they fall at length into an elegant poem or oration. That chance and blind accident, the usual parent of confusion and all deformity in men's actions, should yet in this outdo the greatest art and diligence in the production of such admirable, stupendous effects, is contrary to all the rules that human nature has been hitherto accustomed

to judge by; and fit for none to assert but for him, who with his God has *also* renounced his *reason*.

3dly, The folly of such a person appears from the causes and motives inducing him to take up this opinion; which, amongst others, are two.

1st, Great impiety, and disquiet of conscience consequent thereupon. Some have finned their accounts so high, and debauched their consciences so far, that they dare not look the persuasion of a Deity in the face; and, therefore, they think to convey themselves from God, by hiding God from themselves; by suppressing, and, as much as they can possibly, extinguishing all belief and thought of him. They are so hardened in sin, and so far gone in the ways of sensuality, that to think of retreating by repentance, is loathsome, and worse than death to them; and, therefore, they cut the work short, and take off all necessity of repentance by denying providence, and a future judgment of the lives and actions of men.

2dly, The second cause of this opinion, is great ignorance of nature and natural causes. It is a saying of the lord Bacon, *That a taste and smattering of philosophy inclines men to atheism*, but a deep and a thorough knowledge of it, directly leads men to religion. And if the assertor of the world's eternity, or of its emerging out of the forementioned coalition

coalition of atoms, would consider how impossible it is for a body to put itself into motion, without the impulse of some superior immaterial agent; and what an unactive sluggish thing that is that the philosophers call matter, and how utterly unable to fashion itself into the several forms it bears, he would quickly fly to a spiritual, intelligent mover, such an one as we affirm to be *God*.

4thly and lastly, The folly of such persons as say in their heart, *There is no God*, appears from those cases, in which such persons begin to doubt and waver, and fly off from their opinion. I shall instance in two.

1st, In the time of some great and imminent danger. As it is reported of the *Persians* in *Æschylus*, that were routed by the lake *Strymen*; and thereupon, being either to pass the ice then ready to thaw, or to be cut in pieces by the enemy; though before they held, or at least pretended to hold, that *there was no God*; yet then they fell upon their knees, and prayed to God, that the ice might bear them: nor is this to be wondered at, since all men by nature seem to have a secret acknowledgment of a certain invisible power, that is able either to help or to hurt them, which perhaps is the first rude draught, and original seed of the persuasion of a Deity. And it is this secret acknowledgment that naturally makes men, in a great strait and extremity, willing to rely upon more assistances than they see,

see, and to extend their hope further than their sense.

But now, is not every such person most ridiculous, who shall owe his religion to the disturbances of his fear, which he cast off in the settlement of his reason? Shall a little danger and confusion make him quake out his atheism, and be able to enthrone God in his mind, who by his being and constant preservation, and the exact frame and order of the universe, could never yet be convinced of any such thing? But this is an evident sign, that the judgment of such persons lies not in their understanding, but in the *lower* region of man's nature, their affections.

2dly, The other time in which the *atheist* usually deserts his opinion, is the time of approaching death. What a different way of reasoning and discoursing has the mind then, and needs must it have so! for *atheism* is not any real persuasion, but a vain pretence and affectation, by which some would seem to be greater wits, and higher speculators than other men.

But alas! affectation expires upon the death bed. No man then has any designs to deceive or impose upon the reason of other men, much less upon his own. All his thought and desire then, is to be as safe as he can; he knows that it has been the judgment of all the wise men in the world, that there is a Supreme Judge, and a future estate for
men's

men's souls; and he perceives his reason too light and too little to lay in the balance against them.

But now it is a most righteous thing with God, to let such, as have striven to free themselves from this belief, be able to overrule and bind up their conscience so far, as to keep it down for a long time; and then at length, to let conscience loose upon them, with this terrible perswasion quick and awakened upon it: for God has not put it into any man's power to extinguish this witness that he has left of himself in the minds of men; he has not left men so much at their own disposal, as to obliterate and rase out what he has wrote in their hearts, and to be atheists when they please. And therefore, wheresoever I have hitherto made mention of atheists, I understand not such as have absolutely shook off the notion of a Deity, but such as have endeavoured and attempted so to do, by arming themselves with arguments and considerations against it; and accordingly have proceeded so far, as to weaken and eclipse the present actings of this habitual perswasion; otherwise I fully believe, that there are some lucid intervals, in which, maugre all the art and force used to suppress it, it breaks forth and shews its terrifying commanding majesty over the guilty hearts of such wretches, but especially when they are to bid adieu to those little worldly supports that for a while bore up

up their spirits in their prophaneness and contempt of God.

I have now finished what I first proposed from the words, namely, the assertion, that *there is no God*, and the author of it, *the fool*.

But here after all, is it not a sad thing, that it should be pertinent for any preacher to make a sermon against atheism! A sin, that does not only unchristian, but unman the person that is guilty of it! But we have great reason to judge, that the corruption of men's manners is grown to that enormous height, that men are not as they were heretofore. Those awes of religion, and a Deity, that a less improved debauchery left still untouched upon the conscience, the modern, and more through-paced sinner endeavours to efface, and throw off as pedantry and narrowness, and the foolish prejudices and infusions of education.

What this will come to, and whether God and nature will suffer men to be as bad as they strive to be, I cannot determine; but, surely, they generally affect a superiority in villany above their ancestors; and it is not enough for a man to approve himself a laborious drunkard, and a dextrous cheat, or a sly adulterer, unless he can set off all with the crowning perfection of passing for a compleat atheist.

I suppose the foregoing discourse may be of some use to us; and, if so, what can that
use

use be so properly, as to give every one of us a view and prospect into his own heart? None knows how much villany lodges in this little retired room. The prophet tells us, *that the heart is desperately wicked*; and we need no other argument to prove his words, than that it is the soil where this detestable weed grows. There are few who believe, that they can be *atheists*, (even in the sense that I have declared) but it is because they have not studied the workings and methods, the depths and hollownesses of that subtle principle within them, their heart. But as for such as will set themselves to watch over and counterwork it, so as to prevent this monstrous birth, let them be advised to beware of three things, (as I think) the most ready leaders to atheism.

1st, Great and crying sins, such as make the conscience raw and sick, and so drive it to this wretched course for its cure.

2^{dly}, Let them beware of discontents about the cross passages of God's providence towards them. A melancholly discontented mind, by long brooding upon these things, has at length hatched the cockatrice's egg, and brought forth atheism.

3^{dly and lastly}, Let men especially beware of devoting themselves to pleasure and sensuality. There is no one thing in the world that casts God out of the heart like it, and makes

makes the heart by degrees to hate and be weary of all thoughts of him.

These things cannot here be insisted upon. It remains, therefore, that we endeavour to preserve a constant fear and love of the great God upon our spirits; that so we fall not into the fatal, devouring gulf of either of their sins; as namely, to *deny the Lord that bought*, or to renounce the God that made us.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N IV.

P S A L M cvi. 7.

*Our fathers understood not thy wonders
in Egypt: they remember'd not the
multitude of thy mercies; but pro-
voked him at the sea, even at the
Red Sea.*

PROVIDENCE, in all its parts and methods of acting, seems to carry on this great design, not to leave itself without witness in the world. And for this cause, it gives greater or less manifestations of its superintendency over affairs here below, those especially relating to the church, according to the proportion of the church's exigencies and occasions. Which when they are so great and arduous, that they seem even to call out for help from heaven, and to exceed all possibility of redress, but by the interposal of a miracle, why then miracles come in season, and shall be shewn, as being the rarities and reserves

reserves of heaven, designed to recover upon men's hearts a belief of that Providence that the constant, uninterrupted course of natural causes is apt to obscure, and to render the less observable.

But in no passage since the creation did Omnipotence ever so eminently make bear its arms, and shew itself, as it did in those stupendious proceedings in *Egypt*, following miracle with miracle, till at length, even in spight of power and malice, and obstinacy itself, it brought out the armies of *Israel* free and victorious, from amidst the iron-grinding jaws of a long, a cruel and unsupportable bondage and subjection.

And that the world may see, that the hand of Divine Power is not yet shorten'd, nor the the bowels of Divine Goodness straitened, but that God is as able and ready to save his church as ever: succeeding ages have not been wholly without some declarations of it, in several transcendent and miraculous instances of help and deliverance; when once the straitness and vast difficulty of affairs has baffled and laught at all assistances of created power, and so made the Omnipotent Author of the deliverance visible and conspicuous.

And amongst these supernatural Instances of temporal mercy, vouchsafed to mankind in these latter ages of the world, there is none certainly superior, if any parallel, to that glorious master-piece of Providence, to the com-

memoration of which we are called by this day's solemnity. For if ever the miracles of *Egypt* were re-acted, it has been upon the scene of *England*; which stands, as it were, a copy and a lasting transcript both of the bondage and the deliverance. Both church and state were under the yoke and lash of remorseless tyrants and task-masters. Tyrants resolved to have bound the bonds of their captivity for ever, and never to have let them go: nor was there any hope or likelihood of it, till God himself undertook the business, and plagued the nation, by shaking the threatening sword of a civil war over it, that had so lately turned all into blood; by blasting it with the hail and stones of several insulting governments, then as changeable as the weather; also pestering the land with the frogs of this sect, and the lice of that, and the locusts of another: likewise confounding our *English Egyptians* with the thick darkness of faction and ignorance; and, lastly, snatching away that first-born of tyranny, perjury and rebellion, and blowing him cut of the world, as he did the locusts out of *Egypt*; till at length breaches and divisions amongst themselves, like the dividing of the *Red Sea*, and the parting of the mighty waters, both swallowed up them, and became as a wall of brass on both hands, to our king and his loyal exiled subjects, to convey them safe into a possession of those rights which, both

both by the gift of God, and the laws of men, were so undoubtedly their own.

Thus we have seen some resemblance between the transactions of Providence with *Israel*, and with ourselves. We have seen how like we are to them for their *miraculous deliverances*; and, which is the worst, though perhaps the nearest, part of the resemblance, it will appear also presently, how like we are to them for their *miraculous ingratitude*.

In the text we have these three things observable.

- I. The unworthy and ungrateful deportment of the *Israelites* towards God, upon a most signal mercy and deliverance: *They provoked him.*
- II. The aggravation of this unworthy deportment, from the nature and circumstance of the deliverance: *They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.*
- III. and lastly, The cause of this misbehaviour and unworthy deportment, which was their not understanding the designs of mercy in the several instances of it: *They understood not thy wonders in Egypt.*

Ist, And first for the first of these, the *Israelites* ungrateful and unworthy deportment towards God: *They provoked him.*

To *provoke*, is an expression setting forth a peculiar and more than ordinary degree of

misbehaviour; and seems to import an insolent daring resolution to offend. A resolution not contented with one single stroke of disobedience, but such a one as multiplies and repeats the action, till the offence greatens, and rises into an affront; and as it relates to God, so I conceive it strikes at him in a threefold respect.

1st, Of his power. 2^{dly}, Of his goodness. 3^{dly}, Of his patience.

1st, And first it rises up against the power and prerogative of God. It is, as it were, an assault upon God sitting upon his throne, a snatching at his sceptre, and a defiance of his very royalty and supremacy. He that provokes God does in a manner dare him to strike, and to revenge the injury and invasion upon his honour. He considers not the weight of God's almighty arm, and the edge of his sword, the swiftness and poison of his arrows, but puffs at all, and looks the terrors of sin-revenging justice in the face. The *Israelites* could not sin against God, after those miracles in *Egypt*, without a signal provocation of that power that they had so late, and so convincing an experience of: a power that could have crushed an *Israelite* as easily as an *Egyptian*; and given as terrible an instance of its consuming force upon false friends, as upon professed Enemies; in the sight of God, perhaps, the less sort of offenders of the two.

And

And can the sins of any nation in the world more affront God, in the grand attribute of his power, than the sins of ours; which has given such flaming illustrious experiments of itself, as have dazzled our eyes and astonished our hearts! For have we not seen a flourishing state and a glorious church broke in pieces, and as it were extinguished in a moment? and a prince, as great as good, torn out of his throne, stripped of his power, and at length disastrously cut off by the hand of violence? and dare we now sin against that power that has thus shewn us how easily it can confound and overturn all the glories of worldly grandeur? and which after all this has, by a miraculous exertion of itself, called up a buried church and state from the grave, and given them a stupendous resurrection from the confusion and rubbish of a long and woeful desolation: And this by bringing back the banish'd son of a murdered father, even over the heads of his enemies armed and potent, and rather amazed than conquered into their former allegiance. A work so big with miracle and wonder, so apparently *above*, nay even *against*, the common methods of human acting, that, were there no other argument to prove a Providence, this one passage alone were sufficient; and that such an one as carries in it the force and brightness of a demonstration.

2dly, *Provoking God* imports an abuse of his goodness. God, as he is cloathed with power,

is the proper object of our fear; but as he displays his goodness, of our love. By one he would command, by the other he would win and (as it were) court our obedience. And an affront to his goodness, his tenderness, and his mercy, as much exceeds an affront of his power as a wound at the heart transcends a blow on the hand. For when God shall shew miracles of mercy, step out of the common road of providence, commanding the host of heaven, the globe of the earth, and the whole system of nature out of its course, to serve a design of goodness upon a people, as he did upon the *Israelites*; was not a provocation, after such obliging passages, infinitely base and insufferable, and a degree of ingratitude, higher than the heavens it struck at, and deeper than the sea, that they passed through?

3dly, *Provoking God* imports an affront upon his long-suffering, and his patience. The movings of nature, in the breasts of all mankind, tell us how keenly, how regretfully, every man resents the abuse of his love; how hardly any prince, but one, can put up an offence against his acts of mercy; and how much more affrontive it is to despise mercy ruling by the golden sceptre of pardon, than by the iron rod of a penal law. But now patience is a further and an higher advance of mercy; it is mercy drawn out at length; mercy wrestling with baseness, and striving, if possible, even to weary and outdo ingratitude; and

and therefore a sin against this is the highest pitch, the utmost improvement, and, as I may so speak, the *ne plus ultra* of provocation. For when patience shall come to be tired, and even out of breath with pardoning, let all the invention of mankind find something further, either upon which an offender may cast his hope, or against which he can commit a sin. But it was God's patience that the ungrateful *Israelites* sinned against; for they even plied and pursued him with sin upon sin, one offence following and thronging upon the neck of another, the last account still rising highest, and swelling bigger, till the treasuries of grace and pardon were so far drained and exhausted, that they provoked God to *swear*, and what is more, to *swear in his wrath*, and with a full purpose of revenge, *that they should never enter into his rest.*

And thus I have given you the threefold dimension of the provocation that the *Israelites* passed upon God; and it is to be feared, that our sins have been cast into the same mould, they do so exactly resemble them in all their proportions; for we are as deep in arrears to heaven, and have as large a sum of abused goodness and patience to account for, as ever they had; and so much greater is our account than their's could be, that we had the advantage of their example to *have forewarned us.*

2dly,

2dly, I proceed now to the second thing proposed from the text; which is, the aggravation of the *Israelites* unworthy deportment towards their almighty deliverer, set forth in these words: *They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.*

The extraordinary emphasis of which expression, in the repeated use of the same words, shews what a particular and severe observation God passed upon their behaviour. The baseness and ingratitude of which he casts in their teeth, by confronting it with the eminent obligation laid upon them, by the glorious deliverance he vouchsafed them; a deliverance heightened and ennobled with these four qualifications.

1st, Its greatness. 2dly, Its unexpectedness. 3dly, Its seasonableness. 4thly, Its undeservedness.

Of each of which in their order.

1st, And first for the greatness of the deliverance. Very great surely it must needs have been, comparing the contemptible weakness of the persons delivered, with the strength and terror of the enemy from whom they were delivered. What were a company of poor oppressed bricklayers, innured to servitude as to an inheritance, for four hundred years successively, and consequently whose very soul and spirit was even lost in clay and rubbish, and made poor, and low, and grovelling by the disciplines of a long captivity. How were these
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able to have looked *Pharaoh* and his armies in the face, who had so long trembled under the frown and lash of the meanest of his task-masters ! What could their trowels have done against the *Egyptian* swords ; their aprons against the others armour and artillery ! They could be confident of nothing, but of sinking under the inequality of the encounter.

And could there be a greater deliverance than thus to fetch a lamb out of the jaws of the lion, to wrest weakness out of the hands of power, and the captive from the clutches of the strong ! This was the case of the *Israelites*.

And surely we shall find that it was our own too. For could there be a greater disproportion then there was between us and our oppressing enemies ? Were they not, even in the very day of our deliverance, as strong, as mighty, and well armed as ever ? Were their hands at all weakened, that they could not strike, or their swords blunted, that they could not wound ? Naturally speaking, I am sure they were not : But whether their hearts were for the present changed by an immediate impression from heaven, or their hands overruled by the art and conduct of that great restorer of his country ; certain it is, they were like men in amaze, and not able to act the habitual villainy of their principles and dispositions. So that we saw our king returning to his own triumphantly, at the head of
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that army by which he had been driven and kept out; an army with their swords in their hands, and, for the most part, with their old principles in their hearts. And had not this deliverance all the marks of greatness and prodigy, that, (be it spoke with reverence) Almightyness itself could stamp upon it? Search the annals of story, run over all the records of antiquity, and give it a parallel if you can. It could be none *but the Almighty's doing*, and therefore *ought to be marvellous in our eyes*. It carried its author in its front, and every circumstance of the transaction was noted with the traces and signatures of a Divine Power and Contrivance. It was too great for the measures of any *finite* created agents.

2dly, A second property of the deliverance vouchsafed to the *Israelites* at the *Red Sea*, was its unexpectedness. Their wits failed them to contrive an escape, as well as their power to make good a resistance. The enemy was *behind*, and the sea before them; that is, death both faced them, and pursued them too: and could they expect, that either the hardened heart of a *Pharaoh* should relent and bid them return, or the devouring element forget its cruelty, and turn their sanctuary to protect them?

It is true, indeed, that if any people in the world might have expected such miraculous countermands upon nature, they were the *Israelites*,

raelites, to whom custom and frequency had made miracles so familiar, as even to offer them to their expectation. Yet we know they were far from inferring their future preservation from their former deliverance, and that the God of their fathers would act as miraculously in one, as he had done in the other; and thereupon we read these worthy expostulations of their infidelity, striking directly indeed at *Moses*, but tacitly reflecting upon God himself. *Exod. xiv. 11, 12. Because there were no graves in Ægypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us out of Ægypt? Did we not say to thee in Ægypt, Let us alone, that we may serve the Ægyptians? for it had been better for us to serve the Ægyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.* Death was their belief, death their fear, nothing but death their expectation. But now how welcome, how sweet, and even transporting must such a deliverance needs be, as steps in between a great mischief and a great fear; as disappoints and confutes the terror of a man's expectations, and (as I may so say) baffles him according to his heart's desire? For the expectation and hope of a good fulfilled, is not so pleasing as the expectation and fear of a great evil defeated. It does not affect the mind, with so sensible, so quick, and so exalting a delight. The reason of which is, because enjoyment in this
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state of mortality does not so much gratify as misery does afflict us; and consequently nature more desires to be delivered from one, than to be possessed of the other. If ever there is a *picture of silver*, to set forth an *apple of gold*, it is when the mercy of the deliverance is set forth and enhanced by the precedent fears and despairs of him that is delivered: For can any delight be greater, than for a man to set his foot upon the neck of that enemy, by whom but three minutes before he expected certainly to die! To behold that sea opening itself as a bosom to embrace, which he could not expect to be any other than a grave to swallow and consume! With these circumstances of endearment did God deliver the *Israelites*.

And with the very same did he advance the mercy of our deliverance: for it was a thing so much beyond men's expectation, before the doing of it, that they could scarce believe it when it was done; the astonishing strangeness of the thing made men almost question the reports of their own eyes and ears, and disbelieve the information of their very senses, so that we might in that day have took up those emphatical words of the prophet *David*: *Lord, when thou shalt turn the captivity of thy people, then were we like unto those that dream* The matter and subject of our joy was so strange and unlikely, that, like men in a dream, we seemed to enjoy it

it rather by the flattering representations of fancy, than to possess it by any reality of fruition.

For so improbable was it, a little before it happened, that foreign princes and nations began to lay aside all hope of the king's restoration; and our next neighbours, together with their hopes of that, began to give over also their respects to his person, banishing him out of their territories, without any consideration of his near alliance of blood, and (which ought to have been the warmest argument in the breast of kings) the distress of majesty by such an act of inhospitable barbarity, as before was unheard of, and, perhaps, never practised but by themselves. And as for affairs here at home, factions and animosities grew higher and higher, clashing indeed amongst themselves, but unanimously conspiring against the royal interest. *Nay*, and did not the wonted fidelity and courage of many begin to warp and decline, while they were willing to buy a settlement under any usurped government, with the price of their allegiance to the right and lawful: so that the title of the just heir was looked upon as forlorn and desperate, and the restitution of it exploded as a thing impracticable; and that by many virtuoso's who *now enjoy* so much under it, that they forget what formerly they *deserved from it*. And so far did things then seem to settle upon another bottom, that, as
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the *Israelites* said, *Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians*: so all parties, but the royal and episcopal, were recognizing and courting the new puny protector, and adoring that rising *ignis fatuus* as the *Persians* do the sun, comparing him (forsooth) to a peaceable *Solomon*, succeeding in the throne of his warlike father *David*; and there is no doubt, but the father was just as like *David* for his piety, as the son was like *Solomon* for his wisdom; much at one.

But so little did their covenant put them in mind of their king, that his highnesses most loyal and obedient subjects, especially of the schismatical preaching order, desired no change, nor ever thought of any, till the ministerial maintenance (so much as remained of it) began to reel and totter, and be made a prey to those whom they themselves had preached into such principles, as would in the issue have certainly devoured them.

And as these persons desired no change, so the hearts, even of the loyal and the faithful, began to fail, and scarce to expect any; at least, in such a manner as it came to pass. For who could have believed, that so many parties, whom, both their guilt and interest had made so inveterate against their prince, could ever have fallen down at the feet of offended majesty, but in the field? That those whose blood boiled so high against him, could ever have been brought to receive him, keeping

keeping the same blood still in their veins? None could have expected any other restoration of his majesty but by dint of sword, by the battle of the warrior, with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; or, in a word, that he should return any other way, than by which he was driven out. Let this, therefore, be the second commending property of our deliverance, that while it met with our desires it transcended our expectations.

3dly, The third commending property of the *Israelites* deliverance, was the eminent seasonableness of it. God delivered them at that very nick of time, when they were but one remove, one hair's breadth from destruction. One hour's delay might have made the deliverance for ever impossible. So that it was a mercy in season, and therefore in its prime. The hand of the enemy was already lift up, and then it could not be long before the blow. But God that interposes between the purpose and the action, even then when it is ripest for it, and immediately passing into it, diverted the enemy's rage, and took from him the power of revenge almost in the very midst of the opportunity. A rescue from death, though but threatening at a distance, is a mercy; but to rescue from it when it hovers over a man, and is even grasping him in his talons, is the most endearing circumstance of mercy.

And now, if we pass from the *Israelites* to ourselves, (as very easily and naturally we may) we know how seasonably the day of our temporal redemption sprang in upon us. Our long-dying liberty seemed then taking its last grasp, and God knows what mischiefs were then hatching in the breasts of those tyrants. For that the furnace was heating, might be known by the sparks that flew out. A massacre was often spoke of and urged, and, it is like, not far from being *intended*; the ministry and the law were then professedly struck at; new oaths of abjuration invented and imposed, to ensnare the nation; and, if it were possible, to plunge it deeper in perjury than it was before. Religion was so unhinged, both as to the discipline and doctrine of christianity, that there was nothing certain but change, nothing constant but variety; *till*, having run the round of all other alterations, they were passing into direct atheism, and casting off that Deity, whom, having so notoriously disobeyed, it was their concernment also to deny. In a word, the nation was then involved in an universal confusion; its government, its laws, its religion, were then following their prince into banishment, and resolved not to return till he did.

And, surely, now it grew high time for the *English* nation to think of recovering itself from some of that infamy and loud reproach

pröach, that the spilling of innocent royal blood, and the prophane invasion of all that was sacred or civil had brought upon it, in the opinion of all the nations round about, that stood as spectators and detesters of those religious barbarities, those villanies cloaked and sanctified with the name of reformation. Time it was also for God to shew himself, upon the account of our exiled distressed sovereign, least the taunts and triumphs of a too long successful villany, might have took away either the hearts of his subjects, that they *would not*, or their abilities, that they *could not* have ministered to the necessities of his royal person. For, for ought we know, had the rod of usurpation lain any longer upon us, the fountains of relief had been quite stopped both at home and abroad, and the heir and lord of three flourishing kingdoms have wanted bread, and the common supplies of human life: for to hear, (as we may from some) to how low an ebb the barbarous tyranny of his enemies had sometimes brought him, might even melt the hardest of our hearts, till they ran out at our eyes: but I shall forbear the rehearsal of such stories so full of tragedy, that they must needs spread a cloud upon the joys and festivities of this blessed day. And I would not willingly contradict my subject, and make an unseasonable discourse upon so seasonable a *deliverance*.

4thly, The fourth and last crowning property of the deliverance vouchsafed by God to the *Israelites*, was its absolute *undeservedness*. The entire cause of it was the Divine Goodness, but none of theirs. And therefore, *Moses* knowing the innate arrogance and pride of that insolent, as well as undeserving people, most particularly cautions them against such flattering thoughts: *Think not*, says he to them, *that God has done these great things for thee, for any righteousness of thine; for thou art a stiff-necked people*, Deut. ix. 6. And again, in ver. 24. *You have been rebellious against the Lord, from the day that I knew you*. So that, if there was any merit in obstinacy, any worth in Ingratitude, then indeed, their claim stood full and high, and of all other people upon earth they were the most meritorious.

And now, bating these good qualifications, can we alledge any thing more for our deserving the deliverance here acknowledged by us, than the ingrateful and rebellious *Israelites* could plead for theirs? Did we so well improve ourselves under God's judgments, as to be fit for such a mercy? We saw a civil war reaping down thousands and ten thousands of our countrymen; but has it cut off so much as one of our publick sins? Have not our vices grown under the sword, like trees under the pruning-hook, gathering thence only a greater luxuriance and fertility? Have

Have we mourned and humbled ourselves, according to the greatness of the occasion? and if, peradventure, any of us have mourned, has it not been more for the effects of the war, than for the causes of it? for the ruin and the waste that it has brought upon our families and estates, rather than for the crying sins that first blew the trumpet, and drew the fatal sword to revenge God's quarrel upon us in the field?

Even self-love might fill the eyes with tears, and cover the back with sackcloth, for the untimely loss of a father, an husband, or a brother; but how many of us wept or sigh'd to see majesty trampled upon, religion abused, or the sacred houses of God prophaned? No; these things were but little settled in most men's thoughts; they scarce sigh'd or groaned for any thing but for taxes and impositions. All which considered, we were so far from meriting such an incomparable deliverance, that had God treated us according to our merits, we had never been delivered.

We have now seen the four several properties that commended and gave a value to the deliverance of the *Israelites*; every one of which contributed to enflame their account, and to stamp their ungrateful, provoking behaviour with an higher aggravation. And we have seen also the parallel between their deliverance, and our own, so exactly made out, that there is not one of these properties failing

in it : for our deliverance was altogether as great as unexpected, as seasonable, and as undeserved, as theirs could be : it might vie with it in every particular.

And if that charge can be now made good against us, that the text draws up against them, of *provoking God* ; surely, our guilt must be as great as our deliverance, and every way equal the vast measures of theirs. It cannot be pleasing to rip up old sores, even to those who desire to cure them. But, whether the preacher does it, or no, our ingratitude will lay open and proclaim itself. Ingratitude, I say, the crying, crimson sin of this delivered nation : a sin of an universal comprehension, and (as I may so speak) the generalissimo of sins, having an influence upon all the particular sins and irregularities of our practice. *And if* we ask, in what the nation has been so ungrateful, it is a question best answered by another. In what has it not ?

We have been harassed by a long civil war ; and by a peace, under several sorts of usurpers, worse than a war. We have seen a general confusion, of all ranks and degrees : and, as if the flood-gates of popular insolence had been opened, we have seen an inundation breaking in upon all, and subverting every thing above it ; even from the king to the meanest gentleman ; from him that commanded three kingdoms, to him that had the command but of one servant ; and with the
the

the confusion of order and degree, we have seen the same also in point of property; no man was able to call any thing his own, but slavery. The honour went first, and the estate stayed not long behind. This is a summary account of the mischiefs we then groaned under.

And a merciful Providence was pleased to deliver us from every one of them. For we have had a peace at home, a peace, enabling us to make war abroad; and this under a prince of an undoubted title, and an unparallel'd goodness: A prince, representing God, not only in point of majesty, by vicergerency, as all princes do, but eminently, and beyond example, in that, his beloved attribute, that must save the world, his pardoning mercy: which he has imitated so far, even towards his bitterest enemies, that he has pardoned more and greater offences, than they themselves could, with any face or modesty, have expected.

But how has this goodness been answered? Have not pardons been followed with plots? the blessings of peace and settlement been entertained with murmurings, repinings, and reflections upon his government, not to say, upon his person also; under whose shadow they enjoy all this? Have those who have been restored to the privileges of their birthright and nobility, behaved themselves with that gratitude to him, that, under God, is the foun-

tain of honour? and have they pursued those courses that must give a lustre to titles, and ennoble nobility itself? Have those that have been restored to their estates, stretched out their hands, and opened their bowels to their indigent fellow-sufferers, who served the same master, and whose fortunes fell sacrifices to the same cause; who fought with them, or rather for them: but have not these been rather neglected and scorned for their poverty, the effect of their fidelity; and, at length, been even ground to powder, by that which was designed for their relief? I am afraid, if we come to be arraigned with these questions, we must be forced to plead guilty to them all.

Having thus dispatched the two first things proposed from the text, to wit, the *Israelites* unworthy and ungrateful behaviour towards God, upon a great deliverance, together with the aggravation of it; as also shewn how much their case has been made ours, in both respects; I proceed now to the third and last thing proposed from the words, namely, *the cause of this unworthy behaviour, which was their not understanding the designs of mercy in the several instances of it: They understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* Now, in every wonderful passage of providence, two things are to be considered, first, *the author, by whom*; second, *the end, for which* it is done: neither of which were understood by the *Israelites*, as they ought to have been.

1st,

1st, And first, for the author of it. It is more than probable, that many of the *Israelites* ascribed most of those wonders to the skill of *Moses* transcending that of the *Ægyptian* magicians, or to his working by the assistance of an higher and more potent spirit, than that which assisted them. Or, in case they did believe them to have been the effects of a Divine Power, yet they did not inure their minds seriously to consider it, so as to have a standing awe of that power imprinted upon their hearts by such a consideration: and he that considers great and concerning matters superficially, in the language of the scripture, does not *understand them*.

Now, I believe this will be found to have been most particularly the sin of this nation: For how many, who think atheism a piece of ingenuity, ascribe the whole passage of the king's restauration to chance and accident, or to this man's prudence, or that man's miscarriage; not considering how impossible it was for any human contrivance to lay a train of so many causes, so many accidents, so exactly, and to make so many opposite interests and cross circumstances fall into a direct and perfect suberviency to the composing this one grand work: a work so incomparably great, that, to adjudge the entire accomplishment of it to any creature under heaven, would be to rob God of the honour of one of his greatest actions, and to take the crown off from providence,
and

and to set it upon the head of human counsels. And then, no wonder if ingratitude for a blessing follows, where the author of it is neither understood nor acknowledged.

2dly, The other, and the chief thing to be considered in every wonderful deliverance, is the intent and end of it. Which, surely, is not that men should forget it as soon as it is done, or turn it into wantonness, and make it minister to the excesses of pride, luxury, and intemperance. God neither dried up the sea, to bring the *Israelites* into a land flowing with milk and honey, that they might debauch, revel, and surfeit upon that mercy: nor did he, by a miracle as great, reinstate a company of poor, distressed exiles in the possession of their native country, that they should live at that rate of vanity and superfluity, that the world now a-days cries out upon them for. God did not work wonders to cloath and feed a few worthless parasites with the riches of a kingdom, to fill their cups with the blood of orphans and the tears of the widows. God did not intend that so universal a blessing, big enough for us all, should be diverted underground, into the obscure, narrow channel of a few private purses; leaving so many loyal, suffering, undone persons, to sigh and mourn over their destitute condition, in the day of a publick joy. God did not restore us to scoff at religion, and to malign his church, as if the nation and the government might stand well

well enough without a church, but not without plays. No; surely, this was not the intent of this miraculous deliverance, whatsoever has been made the event of it. The voice of God in it calls us to humility, to industry, to temperance, to publick-mindedness, to great and generous actions, for the good both of church and state. And if, instead of these, we resolve to spit in the face of mercy, by still pursuing a vain, luxurious, prophane course of life, we shall find, that he who rules in the kingdoms of men, and appoints over them whomsoever he will, can turn the stream of our happiness, and destroy us after he has done us so much good,

*To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is
most due, all praise, might, majesty and
dominion, both now and for evermore.
Amen,*



S E R M O N V.

MATTH. xvii. 21:

*Howbeit this kind goeth not out but
by prayer and fasting.*

IT was a general received command, and an acknowledged rule of practice, in all ages and places of the *christian world*, that we are *to bear the church*; except only of late, since we began to be wiser than the world, and holy above the scripture; from which this text has been, as it were, discanonicalized, and its authority struck out of date. But no wonder if the church *then* had no jurisdiction, when it had scarce so much as a being; and that men did not use to bear it, when it grew almost impossible for them to see it; and if the disciples of those days regarded not much the casting out of evil spirits, who were chiefly busied about rejecting God's ministers.

But

But heretofore, when men were led by the written word, and not by the *ignis fatuus* of a bold fancy, stiling itself divine revelation, the church was always recognized as Christ's court here upon earth, fully empowered and and commissioned from him to decide all emergent controversies, to interpret doubtful commands, and to make wholesome sanctions and institutions; as particular occasions and the circumstances of affairs should require: that so it might appear, that the assistance of the spirit promised to the church was not a vain thing, or a mere verb.

Now it seemed good to the primitive church, acted by the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, to set apart the time of our blessed Saviour's fasting and temptation in the wilderness, to be solemnized with the anniversary exercise of abstinence, and other holy austerities, for the subduing the flesh, quickening the spirit; that so we might conform to Christ, and worship the author of our religion with the devotions of imitation.

Thanks be to God, our church is lately come out of the wilderness, yet let it not cease to imitate what our Saviour did when he was there. I confess the blessed Jesus is a pattern *above* the imitation of mortality; fitter to terrify than to excite our endeavours; a copy to be admired, not to be transcribed.

His whole life was a continued miracle; in every instance of behaviour his divinity beamed through

through his humanity, and every action was a cast of his omnipotence; and miracles, I acknowledge, were never intended for precepts; nor is any man bound to be omnipotent, divine, or an angel, nor to do such things as are only the effects of such perfections.

Yet even this strange, high, inimitable fasting of Christ may be stripped of the miracle, and by due qualified proportions found a moral duty: for tho' to fast forty days were miraculous, and so not at all concerning us, yet the ends of Christ's fasting, which were to enjoy a more immediate converse with God, the better to fortify himself against the temptation of the devil, and to fit himself for the execution of a great work, laid upon him by the Father; these are all common to us, according to the due abatement of degrees; and therefore, where there is some proportion in the duty, there ought to be the same in the use of the means.

Nay, we may advance the argument further, and dispute thus: That if he, who had no corruption or disorder in his nature, to weaken or betray the motions of the spirit, found it yet fit to undergo these austerities, and violencies to the flesh; how much more ought we, who find a continual rebellion in all our appetites, against the spiritual inclinations of the mind, to endeavour, by such religious arts, to subdue those luxuriances to the obedience of reason, and the dictates of the spirit?

Let

Let us therefore follow Christ, tho' at a distance; for if we may but touch the hem of our great exemplar, by the small beginnings of a faithful imitation, we shall find a virtue coming out from him, to the curing of the flux of sin, and the bloody issue of the most deadly threatening corruption.

We are commanded to be like Christ, but in every likeness philosophy teaches that there are some degrees of dissimilitude; because no likeness amounts to an identity: and when he bids us *be perfect*, he still intends it according to that œconomy of perfection that is incident to an imperfect nature. Wherefore let us not distinguish ourselves out of duty, nor make our ease our religion; but suspect that those arguments are very likely to proceed from the flesh that tend to the flesh's gratification. Tho' we cannot reach Christ in the miracle of the performance, yet we may follow him in the sincerity of the attempt.

Certain it is, from the united testimony of many of the most experienced followers of Christ, that these abstinencies and sower rudiments of self-denial have a signal influence, both to the procuring of mercies, and to the removal of impending judgments.

He that thus hungers is sure to be filled. Fasting may prevent starving, and wearing sackcloth for a-while keep us from wearing it all our days. It is able to reverse a decree, and to remand the word out of God's mouth.

Ahab

Abab himself found it so; and what rewards may we hope for to a true, when so great did attend even the forced abstinencies of an unsound repentance?

As for the words: It is much doubted by expositors, what kind of evil spirit is here intended by our Saviour, which he affirms not to be dispossessed but by prayer and fasting.

Some understand it generally of all evil spirits, contrary to the express letter and sense of the place. Others of an evil spirit of a peculiar and extraordinary fierceness. But others, more appositely and judiciously, interpret it of an evil spirit having had long and inveterate possession of the party, out of whom it was cast; which appears from the 9th of *Mark*; where the spirit is said to have possessed him, *quid idem*, even from a child.

I shall now, by a parallel application, improve the words beyond this particular occasion to their general reason, and extend what was here spoke of, the casting out the devil *as to his person*, to an ejection of him *as to his works*. And whereas the duty of fasting is extraordinary, and a proper instrument to advance the heights and fervours of prayer; the sense of the words, as improveable into a standing perpetual precept, is this:

That there are some corruptions and vices which, partly by reason of a strong situation in our temper and constitution, partly by habit, custom, and inveterate continuance, grow
so

so sturdy, and have so firm an hold of us, that they cannot be subdued, and conquered, and thoroughly dispossessed, but with the greatest ardour and constancy of prayer, joined with the hardest severities of mortification.

This, therefore, is the genuine sense of the words; in which there are these two parts:

1st, An intimation of a peculiar duty. Prayer and fasting.

2^{dly}, The end and design of it; which is to eject and dispossess the unclean spirit.

These are the parts of the text, the intire discussion of which I shall manage in these three particulars.

I. To take a survey of the extent of this text.

II. To shew the due qualifications of it, that render it both acceptable to God, and efficacious to ourselves.

III. To shew how it comes to have such an influence, in dispossessing the evil spirit, and subduing our corruptions.

I. For the first of these: This duty of fasting admits of several kinds and degrees; for in fasting as well as feasting we may find variety.

1st, The first kind is of constant, universal exercise. Universal, both because it obliges at all times, and extends to all persons. And this is nothing but a temperate, sober, and restrained use of the creature; in abridging

the appetites of nature, for the designs of religion; in bringing liberty to the love of reason; and contracting the latitude of things lawful, into the narrower compass of expedients.

He that ventures to the utmost verge of his christian liberty stands upon a precipice; the utmost bounds of lawful are the borders and immediate confines of unlawful. And when the devil thus sets a man upon the pinnacle, he may be sure that he hath designed him for a temptation. To dwell near the sin, without sometimes stepping into it, is very hard. Neighbourhood is still the occasion of visits.

Upon this cause Christ has placed the spirit and soul of his religion, in self-denial, and a renouncing the pleasures, softnesses, and caresses of worldly delights; as knowing though pleasure, and a full enjoyment, is in itself not evil, yet such is the weakness of our nature, that it fails and melts under the encounter; and, by its very enjoyments, is betrayed into the snares of sin, and the regions of death.

'Tis lawful for us to feast with *Job's* sons, yet feasting may sometimes pull the house about our ears. When *Ammon's* heart is merry with wine, then the ambush is ready to rise, and strike him. Fulness of bread was the occasion of *Sodom's* sin, and *Sodom's* sin was the occasion of its destruction. Temperance, therefore, the only easy and constant fast, is the

the great duty of a christian life ; a sure and sovereign instrument of mortification.

And whosoever struggles with any unruly corruption, will perhaps find, that the constant turn of a well-guided abstinence will, in the issue, give a surer dispatch to it, than those extraordinary instances of total abstinence, and higher severities, only undertook for a time. As a land flood, it carries a bigger stream, and comes with a mightier force and noise, yet presently dries up and disappears ; but the emissions of a fountain, tho' gentle and silent, yet are constant and perpetual ; and whereas the other, being gone, leaves nothing behind it but slime and mudd, this, wheresoever it flows, gently soaks into verdure and fertility.

This constant temperance, therefore, is by all means intended by the rules of christianity ; the constancy of which, running through our whole lives, makes abstinence our diet, and fasting our meat and drink.

We used to say, a good conscience is a continual feast ; but, surely, it is in a great measure the effect and product of such a continual fast. Wherefore, let us still secure ourselves by the guards of a temperate and reserved sobriety ; remembering that it was the sop that slid the devil into *Judas*, and the glutton that ushered in the traitor ; and that, in all spiritual surprizes, it is the bait that is most *likely to betray* us to the hook.

2dly, The second kind of fast, is a fast of a total abstinence, when for some time we wholly abstain from all bodily repasts. This is the highest kind, and therefore, in ordinary speech, has engrossed the name of *fast* only to itself, as the name of the whole kind is not unusually confined to the principal member of the division.

We have instances of this frequently in the old testament, and in the new; in the disciples of *John*, in *Cornelius*, and others. And it is not to be questioned, but that this is the fast chiefly intended in the words of the text; that great instrument to exercise, and drive out the evil spirit from a defiled and a possessed heart.

Every remedy is successful according to the portion it bears to the distemper: And certainly a cure is not likely to be wrought, where an ordinary remedy encounters an extraordinary disease; where the plaister is narrow and the wound broad.

Temperance is good, but that is to be our continual diet; and, surely, that man is not like to recover who makes his food his physick. Where the humour is strong and predominant, there the prescription must be rugged, and the evacuation violent. We must leave the road of nature when nature itself is disordered, and the principles of life in danger.

Pos-

Possibly a man may have a transient dis-relish and loathing of his sin; but, have these loathings rested only in thought, or have they improved into contrary resolutions? Suppose they have, and a man has fully resolved against his sin, yet, has he watered those resolutions with prayers and tears, the great conveyance of that strength, which alone can actuate the resolutions? Admit also, that he may have prayed and humbled himself before God, yet still perhaps his corruption is vigorous, and snaps asunder all his resolutions, tramples upon his prayers, and triumphs over his tears and repentances, upon the periodical returns of a temptation, or the critical workings of a bad temper.

Why now the reason of this unconquered activity of his sin, after all these courses taken against it, may be because the place of its strength is yet untouched. Its lock is only hampered, and not cut off by a thorough removal of the fuel and materials of concupiscence, in a severe abstinence from things sometimes necessary: for a distempered stomach will digest aliment into poison.

To eat and to drink is necessary; but even necessity must give place to extremity. And the physician is merciful, if he pines his patient into a recovery. In this case we encounter sin in the body, like a besieged enemy: and such an one, when he has once engarrison'd himself in a strong hold, will endure

a storm, and repel assaults : you must cut off his supplies of provision, and never think to win the fort, till hunger breaks through the walls, and starves him into a surrender.

3dly, The third kind of fast, is an abstinence from bodily refreshments, in respect of a certain sort, or degree, and that undertook for some space of time ; such as is this quadragesimal solemnity ; in which, for the space of some weeks, the church has, in some select days, enjoined a total abstinence from flesh, and a more restrained use of other refreshments.

I am not ignorant, that the same obligation comes also from the civil magistrate, and that for secular ends ; yet, I see not, why there may not be a friendly correspondence between both these : or why one should be thought to exclude the other, which it only confirms : certainly a law ought not to be the weaker for being enacted by a double authority.

I know also, that the celebration of this solemnity is much controverted ; but then it is by those who doubt as much whether they ought to obey the magistrate, and to renounce the principles of religion. But, just as in the apostles times, so in ours also, the church has been troubled with disputes concerning meats ; and whether it be lawful to oblige men, under the gospel, in the use of things, in their nature indifferent,

Some,

Some, who would be reforming, while they should be obeying, who are too holy to need fasting, have too much of the spirit to stand in fear of the flesh; and who still express God's mercies by *marrow* and *fatness*, and such other expressions, as please their palate, and leave a relish upon the tongue that speaks them; so that they cannot be so properly said to preach sermons, as dinners: of which they put their auditors in mind long before they have done. — These, I say, will hear of nothing but of liberty; they must have elbow-room at their meat: and, as for *Lent*, they defy it; it is popish, anti-christian, and idolatrous: and so, their conscience being fallen into their stomach, what one finds troublesome, the other easily concludes superstitious.

But who shall be judges and arbitrators in this case? The scripture, which is to be the rule, is the same, and open to the allegation of both parties. But who shall interpret and apply this rule? Now, in every science and profession, the most rational way to resolve doubts arising in it, has been, either to consult with all, or most of the professors of it; or with some, that are most eminent for their skill and knowledge in it.

Of the first sort, in matters of christianity, we have the church of God congregated in councils: of the second, we have those ancient writers, famous in their ages, for their profound acquaintance with evangelical mysteries,

steries, whom we call *fathers* : let us therefore see the judgment of both these, in this particular.

For councils, I shall mention one for all ; the council of *Nice*, in which we find both mention and approbation of this quadragesimal fast. Add to this the canons of the apostles ; in the 68th of which we read the institution of the same : which canons, tho' they were not writ by the apostles themselves, yet they are of great, undoubted antiquity, and consequently of no less authority in the several ages of the church.

As for the suffrage of the fathers ; I could bring *St. Basil*, and *St. Chrysostom*, of the *Greek* church, *St. Austin* and *St. Jerom*, the two great luminaries of the *Latin*.

Of which *St. Austin*, in his 119th *Epistle* to *Januarius*, has these words : ' *Quadragesima sanè jejuniorum habet auctoritatem & in veteribus libris & in evangelio.*' And *St. Jerom*, in his epistle to *Marcella*, delivers his mind to the same purpose ; ' *Nos unam quadragesimam, secundum traditionem apostolorum toto anno, tempore nobis congrua jejunamus.*' Also in his *Comment upon the 58th of Isaiah*, he speaks to the like intent : ' *Dominus diebus quadraginta in solitudine jejunavit, ut nobis solennes jejuniorum dies relinqueret.*'

I do not desire to multiply quotations, but had rather weigh, than number them ; and therefore these shall be sufficient,

And

And now, let any one judge, whether it is fitter for us to steer our practice according to the ducture of the universal church, or the broken voice of a particular faction, compared to that, both small in number, and inconsiderable in qualification? Must the grey hairs of antiquity, bow down to the upstart appearance of novelty? especially since the same faction that decry fasting in *Lent*, have publickly kept a national fast upon the day of Christ's nativity, in the year 1645; the first fast that was kept by christians on that day, since christianity saw the sun: but, it seems, christianity and reformation are two things.

They talk of reforming, and of coming out of *Egypt*, (as they call it;) but still, tho' they leave *Egypt*, they will be sure to hold fast to their flesh-pots. And the truth is, their very fasts and humiliations have been observed to be nothing else but a religious epicurism, and a neat contrivance of luxury: while they forbear dinner, only that they may treble their supper; and fast in the day, like the evening wolves, to whet their stomachs against night.

But these principles and practices are too rank for the strict, pure, and mortifying severities of christianity. Let us, therefore, poor mortals, who dare not be perfect, above our example, content ourselves to follow our great master, and not be ashamed to be deceived with the universal church.

And,

And, truly, he that with spiritual design, and prudent usage, shall manage this religious solemnity, as with Christ he may be said to fast, so with Christ also he may conquer the tempter. And let all schisms and factions, and pretended reformers, ring about his ears peals of popery, will-worship and superstition; yet still, like Christ in the wilderness, he may converse with God, though his abode be amongst such wild beasts.

And thus I have dispatched the first general head of this discourse; which was to shew the extent and latitude of this duty of fasting, in the several sorts and kinds of it: I must now close up what I have spoke upon this subject, with this cautional obervation:

That in the whole œconomy of the gospel, mercy is predominant; and therefore the rigour of every precept is to be sweetened and reduced to this standing rule, as the vital reason, running through every evangelical institution. We cannot but allow the great legislator of the new law, to carry things with so much equity and evenness, as to fix upon the same law a different proportion of obligation, according to different tempers and occasions.

Now, what Christ said upon another occasion, may be said also of fasting; *Every one cannot receive this saying.* There may be a poison in abstinence, as well as in meats: and when natural weakness and infirmity will not reach the sweetness and perfection of the precept,

cept, it is the genius of the gospel to relax, and not to urge sacrifice, standing in competition with mercy.

Certainly, he that would make the rigours of the sabbath give way to the pulling of an ox or a sheep out of the ditch, would not now ruin a man, for whom even the sabbath was made, only to spare one of those. Where the performance depends upon a power rare and singular, it is there hard to make the duty universal. We know the body is subservient to the uses of the soul : but Christ never destroys one, to save the other ; nor bids any one *put the knife to his throat*, so as to kill himself. We must distinguish between murder and mortification.

Christ commands no man to be a skeleton, or a walking ghost, or to throw away his health, in order to his salvation. A catarrh or a consumption is no man's duty : Self-denial may be a duty ; but, I am sure, self-murder is a sin.

A potion may be sovereign and excellent, but not therefore to be equally administered to all. No application can be successful, but what is managed with caution : and where there is caution, there must be distinction. Every vessel is not alike fit for new wine : an old, crazy cask betrays its burden, and sinks under the vigour and spirituous emanations of too generous a liquor.

There

There is no soul but may pray, and be pious; but there are many bodies that cannot fast. It were a sad thing, if a man should be forced to make his table-cloth his winding-sheet, and his poison his religion. No, undoubtedly; all the injunctions of Christ carry in them nothing but sweetness, convenience, and a tender compliance with the necessities and frailties of human nature.

The weakness of some tempers perform upon them the very same effects, that fasting works upon others; and therefore, those severities, which in others would be only an abridgment of their luxury, would in them be an entrenchment upon their being; and not only cut short their pleasure, but their very existence.

As soon as Jesus Christ had raised one from the dead, we read, that *he commanded something to be given her to eat*, Mark v. 43. And, I am confident, the severity of no institution could have induced him, at that time, to have bid her fast; unless he only raised her from the state of death, that he might send her to it again.

The height of prudence is, in all precepts, laws and institutions, to distinguish persons, times, and occasions, and accordingly to discriminate the obligation; and upon the same exigence of justice to dispence with it in some, upon which it confirms it in others. And prudence is but one part of christianity, which
takes

takes in all moral virtues with advantage and addition: and what is absurd in the functions of right reason, will never be warranted by the rules of religion. Wherefore, as to the matter in hand, I shall comprize all in this one word: Let the observation of this solemn time *be so strict*, as not to bend to any man's luxury; *so dispensable*, as not to grate upon his infirmity.

II. I come now to the second general head, proposed for the discussion of this subject; which is to shew, what are the qualifications that must render this duty of fasting, both acceptable to God, and efficacious to this great purpose.

To give men a right information concerning which, I think to be a matter of very great moment; as perceiving that men egregiously abuse themselves, in the practice of this Duty, spoiling it with strange apprehensions, and loading it with many foreign and praternatural strictnesses, for which they will one day receive but small thanks, either from God, or from themselves. The truth is, the sum of all their miscarriages about it, seems to lie in this, that they depress it into a *bodily exercise*; which the apostle affirms *to profit little*; while they acquiesce barely in this, that they have fasted *so long*, or *so often*; not at all considering, in *what manner*, or *to what end*: whereas, indeed, the former is but the mere bulk and rude draught of this duty; and these

these latter only stamp it divine, and make it spiritual.

Wherefore I shall lay down four *conditions* or *properties*, without a joint concurrence of all which, this duty of fasting can neither be pleasing to God, nor effectual to dispossess the unclean spirit, in the mortification of any strong corruption.

1st, The first is; that it is to be used, not as a duty either necessary or valuable for itself, but only as an instrument. There are some duties that carry in them an absolute necessity; as being founded upon the necessary relation that the creature bears towards God, in respect of its being created by him, and its depending upon him; as also upon the relation that one creature bears toward another, arising from their natural equality and cognation.

Of the first sort are our loving God, adoring him, adhering to him, with the utmost exertion of all the powers and faculties of the soul; demeaning ourselves with that humility and prostration of spirit, that becomes poor shadows before self-sufficiency, weakness before omnipotence; a creature of yesterday, and but for a day, before him who is from everlasting to everlasting. In short, as it becomes a man to behave himself towards that Divine Power, from the arbitrary disposals of whose pleasure he first received his breath, and still holds his being.

Of

Of the second sort are all the duties we owe to our neighbour, in the rank and condition our creation has placed us. As, that we bear a benign affection towards him ; entertain a concernment for him ; upon all occasions advance his good and emolument ; by no means entrench upon his happiness, by *defrauding*, *slandering*, *defiling*, or any ways circumventing those whom God has joined with us in the society and common ligaments of nature and humanity.

Now all these actions, with their respective branches and further improvements, are indispensably requisite, as parts of God's image in us ; and without which the decorum and offices of that station which every man holds both towards God and his fellow creatures, cannot be sustained.

These, therefore, are the principal duties, and chief pillars of morality ; and whatever becomes necessary over and above these, it is so only by way of supply and assistance, as helps and arts to promote the souls in these grand instances of duty.

For we must observe, that there is not only in the mind of man an ingenit sense of *turpe* and *honestum*, that constantly inclines him to the practice of such virtuous actions, but also a strong inclination of appetite, that, like a constant remora, stops and impedes the virtuous principle ; and withal, like a bias, sways and carries him to what is vicious and irregular.

Upon

Upon this ground it is, that to quicken the soul in a course of virtue, we must *removere prohibens*, and weaken the contrary principle of the sensitive appetite, which cloggs and oppresses the other in all its due operations.

Now, since the seat of this appetite is the body, according to the various disposition of which, that becomes either lively or faint in its workings, it follows, that we must lay siege to this, and begin the assault here, as that great apostle and artist in the ways of holiness did before us, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *I keep under my body, least, having preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away.*

How this can be effected surer and better than by fasting, not only christianity, but reason itself is yet to seek. It is this that curbs nature, circumscribes appetite, restrains the gaiety and exorbitance of desire; stops the career of luxury, by taking off its wheels.

He whose nature is reduced, and kept low by the disciplines of religion, is neither a slave to the suggestions of lust, pride, or idleness; their innate fuel is extinguished; and so all their propofalse easily vanish, finding nothing to fasten upon. They are so far from being victorious, that to such an one they are scarce troublesome. He is so far from being subject to their tyranny, that he is not so much as vexed with their importunity.

Now, by all that has been said, it appears, that fasting is required not as a virtue,
but

but as a help to virtue; and that by controuling its hindrance, removing its impediments, subduing the emulations of a contrary principle, and so enabling it to act with freedom.

Otherwise, were there no reluctance from the inferior appetites against a virtuous and a pious course, these arts and stratagems against the flesh would be superfluous, and we should have no more need of fasting than the angels or the blessed spirits have of eating. Could the mariner sail with as much ease and safety in a storm, as he does in a calm, he would never empty or unlade his vessel.

Would a full luxuriant body subserve the ends, and execute the commands of the spirit, with as much readiness and agility as one that is disciplined to such compliances with hunger and hardship; God, who takes no delight to afflict the children of men, you may be sure, would not command us to afflict ourselves; certainly no abstinence would be then more our duty, than to abstain from fasting.

For is there any excellency in the thing itself to commend it to God? Does fasting perfume our sighs, or add a fragrancy to our prayers? Are the *Jejunia Sabbatariorum*, sacrifices of so sweet a savour to the Almighty, that the offerings of justice, piety, and mercy would be nothing valued by him, without the mixture of such incense?

Nay, let me add this one consideration; that *fasting*, as such, considered barely in it-

self, is so far from being of any value in the sight of God, that it is indeed an evil; not *morally*, I confess, but *naturally*; for whatsoever grieves or afflicts nature is an evil to it, and consequently fasting being such an one, would never be allowed, much less commanded by God, if it were not sanctified by its subserviency to a moral good.

Let this therefore be fixed upon, that fasting is neither commanded, nor to be used but merely as a spiritual instrument. And since it is the nature of all instruments to receive their value and worth from their fitness to produce those effects to which they are designed, I believe it would be no hard matter to unravel and run through most of the pompous austerities and fastings of many religious operators, and splendid justiciaries.

Some of which neither know or design any other religion in this duty, but only that at such and such a time they forbore flesh, and made their meal of fish, which perhaps also they loved better. This, they think, is a notable piece of service to God; and so they rise from the table with their blind besotted consciences, as much applauding them, as if they had rose from a well performed prayer.

But may I not say to such an one, thou hypocrite! does God receive any honour at all from this! or does it at all discriminate thee from the *Epicure* in his account, or in the final sentence that he shall pass upon both here-after?

after? May not he that eats fish and he that eats flesh go to the same place of damnation, as well as the fish and flesh that they eat be served up to the same table?

Is there any spiritual design carried on in this abstinence? Is the ruin of any vice drove at; the working of any corruption undermined and defeated by this means? These are the things that God looks at and requires, and which the very nature of the duty suggests; and without which it is but the carcase of a duty; dead and noisom; detestable before God, and irrational in itself.

2dly, *The second condition of a religious fast is, that it be done with a hearty detestation of the body of sin, for the weakening of which it is designed. Whosoever duly undertakes a fast, by the very nature of the duty is actually engaged in a war against his sin; and whoever fought valiantly against him, whom he did not first hate heartily?*

If we have not first wrought our minds to a settled dislike, and a bitter disgust of sin as our mortal enemy, all our attempts against it will be faint and heartless, our mortifications treacherous, and our fastings frustraneous; much like *David's* sending an army against *Absalom* with a design to save him, and to deal with him gently.

It will be only an alarm to sin to put itself into a posture of defence, to retreat further into the soul, and there to rally together its

strengths, and to secure itself by a firmer possession.

It is most certain, that in the same degree that sin is amiable to us, our fast is odious to God, and looked upon by him only as a more solemn mockery and religious provocation.

It is not a mournful expression, a solemn dress, or a thin table, that God so much regards. It is the heart, and not the stomach, that he would have empty ; and therefore, if a man carries a luxurious soul in a pining body, or the aspiring mind of a *Lucifer* in the hanging head of a bulrush, he fasts only to upbraid his Maker, and to disgrace his religion, and to heighten his final reckoning, till he becomes ten times more the son of perdition, than those who own their inward love of sin, by the open undissembled enmities of a suitable behaviour.

Let us not deceive ourselves, nor take an estimate of our duty by false measures and fallacious judgments. He that obeys the injunctions of the church, that executes upon himself the afflicting rigours of external abstinences, he does well ; but he has not therefore done all. Let him not count himself to have fasted to any purpose, if by it he has not got ground of his corruption, in some measure supplanted his sin, and estranged his affections from the beloved embraces of sinful objects.

But if, after all these spiritual arts and severities,

rities, the love of sin continues yet active and entire, let him assure himself, that his fasting will have no other effect upon him, than to send him back to the repeated practice of what he loves, with a fiercer and a keener appetite. The vicissitudes of restraint will only endear the returns of the enjoyment, and draw forth the desires with a quicker and more enflamed inclination.

He, therefore, that would manage this duty to his great and spiritual advantage, let him draw his eye from his table, and turn it unto his soul: let him overlook the spare furniture of one, and see whether there be not large provision laid up for lust in the other. Does he find any vile unmortified desire in his heart? let him extinguish it: any sin in his hands? let him remove it: any blot upon his conscience? let him wash it out in the great laver of souls, the blood of Christ, conveyed to him by a true repentance.

But if these things are not the matter of his care, if he only forbears his meat, and not his sin, let such an one know, that the beasts of *Nineveh* kept as good a fast as he.

Add to all this, that the love of sin cherished in the heart, makes fasting not only an impious, but also an unseemly practice. A man's behaviour contradicts his designs: the duty does not set well upon him; it neither suits, nor squares with his condition. In short, it is as improper and absurd to come

to a fast with a foul heart, as to a feast with foul hands.

3dly, *The third condition of a duly qualified fast is, that it be quickened and enlivened with prayer.* The truth is, one of the greatest designs of this duty is, to be an opportunity of prayer, which is never performed with greater fervency, activity of spirit, and restlessness of importunity, than when nature is abridged, the humours of the body low, and consequently the avocations that it suggests to the mind, small and conquerable.

Prayer is a duty running through all the periods and offices of our lives, but the days of fasting are properly the time of its solemnity. They are (as I may so say) the festivals of devotion. Prayer, joined with fasting, is like an apple of gold set off with a picture of silver. Now we have it at its best advantage; it shines bright, and it flames pure, like fire without the incumbrances of smoak, or the allay of contrary blasts.

And in the management of so great a duty, to be silent and obstinate, to have no petition to prefer, what is it but to transact the whole religion of the fast with our teeth? With a temper inferior to the ox and the brute animals, who low in their hunger, and speak aloud their wants to the hand that feeds them.

Nay, the very reason of a fast seems to require the society of prayer, for it must needs
be

be undertook either for the procuring of some good, or the deprecation of some evil: and is there any way appointed either by God or nature, to represent the wants and grievances of our condition to heaven but by petition? by the solicitations of prayer, a duty whose strange and never-failing successes in all its holy contests with the Almighty, have rendered it not only acceptable, but also invincible?

And, to add example to reason, what saint almost do we find in scripture, whose prayers did not attend their fasts? *Ezra* and *Nehe-miah*, *David* and *Daniel*, took this course; and, doubtless, while *David's knees were weak through fasting*, as he expresses it in *Psalms* cix. 24. they were also employed in kneeling.

One would think, that in this performance the actings of grace might imitate the workings of nature; for, is there any thing so proper to hunger as craving, or to a fast as supplication?

But, where I enforce the conjunction of prayer with fasting, people must not think, that by prayer is meant a formal customary attendance upon the offices of the church, undertook only out of a sordid fear of the eye of man, and then performed with weariness and irreverence, with seldom access, and more seldom devotion; of the duties of which persons I may say this, that if *filth* could be *defiled*, their prayers would defile

their fastings, and their fastings their prayers; so that the joining of one to the other, would be nothing else, than the offering up of *car-
rion with the fumes and incense* of a dung-
hill.

4thly, The fourth condition of a truly religious fast is, that it be attended with alms and works of charity. Amongst our other emptinesses, the evacuation of the purse is proper to this solemnity; and he that inflicts a thorough penance upon this, stops the fountain of luxury, and the opportunities of extravagance.

Charity is the grand seasonage of every christian duty: it gives it a gloss in the *sight* of God, and a value in the *sense* of men; and he fasts properly, whose fast is the poor man's feast; whose abstinence is another's abundance.

In *Isaiah* lviii. 4, 5, 6. God roundly tells his people what was truly a fast, and what was no fast in his esteem: not to abstain from bread, *but to deal it to the hungry*; this is properly to fast: not to wrap ourselves in sackcloth, but to *cover and cloath our naked brother*; this is to be humbled.

To what purpose did the *Pharisees* fast twice a week, when they stayed their stomachs with devouring widows houses? solemnizing all their humiliations with the poor man's groans, and the orphan's tears? To what spiritual intent did our zealots so much exercise
them.

themselves in this duty, when, as the prophet's expression is in the same 58th chapter of *Isaiah*, *they fasted for violence, and to fight with the fist of oppression*, only that they might plunder and pillage with success; that they might make poor for others to relieve, and so provide objects for other men's charity, instead of exercising their own?

But if the constant practice of the church may have any weight with us to determine our practice, we shall find, that works of charity were always looked upon as a proper appendage, if not also an integral part of this duty. In the same place that we read of *Cornelius's* fasting, we find it ushered in with its too great supporters, *prayers and alms*.

And the truth is, if we may compare these two together, alms have so much the preheminance above prayer, that one is a begging of God, the other is a lending to him.

I have now assigned those conditions that I think are both necessary and sufficient to render our fastings effectual to this great end of dispossessing and throwing out the evil spirit,

I confess I have not mentioned the popish austerities of whippings, pilgrimages, and going barefoot, with twenty other such tricks (for they are no better) which they prescribe and use upon these solemnities,

For

For if they were indeed of such sovereign force to help the soul in the practices of virtue, what is the reason that the scripture affords us not one instance of any saint, that ever took this course? The *Pharisees* indeed disfigured and mangled themselves, and treated their bodies much after the same manner, till they made themselves more deformed in the eyes of God, than in the eyes of men.

Other examples besides these I know none; neither will reason supply the defects of tradition, or afford any solid argument to prove, that the evil spirit may be drove out of the soul, as the money-changers were out of the temple, with whips and scourges. The devil does not always go when such weapons *drive*.

Those, indeed, whose religion lies no deeper than their skin, may whip themselves holy, and owe their progress in virtue to the flash and the whipcord: but surely there are none, who have not enslaved their intellectuals by an implicit faith, and tamely resigned themselves first to be deceived, and then to be ruled by impostors, who do not look upon all these carnal assistances of the spirit, as no better than the mortifications of the galleys, or the devotions of the *whipping-post*.

III. I come now to the third and last general head, which is to shew how this duty of fasting comes to have such a peculiar influence in dispossessing the evil spirit, and subduing our corruptions.

And

And here, first by way of denial, we must observe, that it does not affect this work upon the soul.

1st, Either, first, by any casual force naturally inherent in itself; for if it did, fasting would certainly and constantly have this effect upon every man that used it; the contrary of which is undeniably manifest from experience. For how many thousands, after all these abridgments, find their corruptions recoil upon them, with as great a force and fury as ever, their sinful appetites being not at all abated, but rather exasperated and renewed? Which shews, that the bare performance is in itself but a weak, unactive thing, and affects nothing but in the virtue of a superior power, which sometimes co-operates with, sometimes deserts the exercise of this duty.

2dly, Neither 2dly, does fasting effect this great change upon us by way of merit, as procuring and engaging the help of that grace that does effect it: for besides that, it is upon irrefragable grounds of reason evident, that it is impossible for a created nature to merit any thing from God by way of reward. So there is over and above a peculiar poorness and vileness in this action, that degrades it to infinite distances and disproportions, from being able to challenge, at the hands of God, the dispensations of that grace upon which so much depends the weight and moments of eternal glory.

In

In the next place, therefore, to shew *positively* from whence this duty derives this great virtue.

1st, It receives it from divine institution. Whatsoever God *ordains* by his word, he usually *owns* by his assistance; and, therefore, in every thing made a duty by his command: if we bring but endeavour, he will undertake for the success. It is the concernment of his honour, to make his ordinances considerable; and this is done, by making them conduits and conveyances of such a power, as may advance them above themselves to be instrumental to great and spiritual purposes.

Thus, when *Moses* fetched water out of the rock with a stroke of his rod, we are not to imagine that the rod did it by any force inherent in itself; but God having appointed it for such a work, was pleased to attend it with a miraculous effect, and so to credit his institution with the exercise of his omnipotence.

2dly, Fasting comes to be effectual to dispossess the evil spirit, by being a direct defiance to that disposition of body and mind upon which especially he works.

1st, *For the body*. The devil never finds it so pliable to his motions, so instrumental to his designs, as when it is pampered and luxuriant. It is then like a strong liquor, it receives the infusions of poison more intimately and deeply, and diffuses the same with

with stronger and more insinuating communications.

But a body subdued with abstinence, it is to the evil spirit like an unfurnished house; and then we know, that though there is no violence used to drive out an inhabitant, yet bad accommodations will make him dislodge.

2dly, For the mind. This is a singular corrective of that pride and garishness of temper, that renders it impatient of the sobrieties of virtue; but open to all the wild suggestions of fancy, and the impressions of vice.

Now, I say, fasting gives a wound to this disposition in a double respect.

1st, That it is a notable act of self-revenge; and *self* is the only lawful object of revenge. *Paul* reckons this amongst the heroick performances of an extraordinary repentance. 2 Cor. vii. 11. *What care, what zeal has it wrought, nay, what revenge?*

A man by this, does as it were retaliate an evil to the author, and by defrauding himself, he does *fallere fallentem*, which certainly is a pious fraud. It speaks a man hugely in earnest, and intent upon the work of mortification: for of all things in the world, revenge is never in jest; but in returning an evil, it always repays the principal with interest and advantage.

2dly, Fasting corrects and brings down this ill temper of mind, by being an act of self-abase-

abasement and prostration. A man by this in a manner awards upon himself the very judgments which he deprecates. He acknowledges a forfeit of all God's creatures, and therefore he neither *touches nor tastes*, lest in every morsel he should thief and usurp; being by sin, as it were, an outlaw to the common issues of providence.

Now the end of God's judgments is not so much to revenge as to convince, and to lay a man low in the apprehensions of his own wretchedness. Wherefore, if a man thus judges himself, and not only kisses the rod, but also inflicts it with his own hand, he, by this, takes the work out of God's, and makes an affliction superfluous, by anticipating its effect.

Much more might be spoke of this subject; but when we have took all these courses to eject the evil spirit, we must still remember, that it is to be the work of God himself, whom the *blessed spirits* adore, and whom the *evil* obey.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N VI.

REVEL. ii. 16.

Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Reflecting upon these many and strange methods by which sin prevails upon man's will, collected from an ordinary experience and survey of the practices of the world, compared with the infallible verdict of the scriptures; and amongst the rest, of that signal place in *Deut. xxix. 19.* which presents to us one blessing himself, and saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imaginations of my heart to add drunkenness to thirst. I have, upon such reflections, not without some amazement, considered what should be the ground upon which rational discerning men can satisfy and speak peace to their consciences in the very career of

of those sins, the commission of which, even by the confession of those that commit them, leads to assured perdition.

As for that peace that springs from a refined well-contrived hypocrisy, that is wholly of another nature; for where there is some restraint of sin coloured over with some superficial varnish of duty, considering the weakness of man's understanding, and the treachery of his will, it is no wonder that such a peace is easily attainable; nay, that it is very hardly avoidable. But here, where sin is let loose to its full uncontrouled course, so that men lie and wallow in a free and palpable perpetration of it, even arising to the height of this expression, to add drunkenness to thirst; that is, as some expound it, the outward commission of sin to the inward desire; or, as others, a perpetual continued glut and surfeit in sin. As the abused satisfaction of thirst causes drunkenness, and drunkenness again provokes thirst, men never more liberally call for their cups, than when they have too liberally taken them already.

I say, that any one should find peace in such a course, this seems prodigious, and did not scripture and experience over-rule the disputes of reason, almost incredible. But since there is no human action or course without some cause, it will be expedient to enquire what may be the cause of this. And one would think, that the cause that any man
can

can be jocund and fully satisfied in the eager pursuit of known sins, must of necessity be one of these three.

1st, That he is ignorant of the curse that attends his sin; and so no wonder, if blindness produces boldness: for he that is blind, may not only accidentally fall, but soberly go into the ditch. But this cannot be here the cause; for he that thus blesses himself, is said in the former part of the verse to do so, after he had heard the *words of this curse*. A curse plain enough, and large enough, filling all the foregoing chapter, one of the longest in the Bible. So that, if terror set home with evidence, or evidence edged with terror, could convince, ignorance was here unpleadable. The broad light of the word beat full in his face, the discovery was clear, and the conviction unavoidable; and therefore ignorance could not be the cause.

2^{dly}, A second cause might be unbelief: he might know the curse, and yet not believe it; and so, not being believed, it could not controul his comforts. For, tho' apprehension brings the object to the mind; yet it is belief only that lets it in. But neither can this be always the cause: for, certainly, no man is so improved in sin, as to transcend the devil, who, as the schoolmen say, stands *confirmatus in summâ malitiâ*: and yet he *believes*, and that even to *trembling*. He knows and believes that he shall be tormented to the utmost extent of the very least tittle and jot

of all God's threatnings, and yet he sins with a most resolved, implacable purpose; nay, he therefore sins, because he knows and believes it. Wherefore audacious finning is not always founded upon infidelity.

3^{dly}, But, thirdly, tho' he knows and believes the curse, yet, perhaps, he relaxes nothing of his sin, because he resolves to bear it; and has wrought himself into that hardiness and courage, as to think that he can weather out the storms of God's wrath, and stand the shock of eternal vengeance; and, like *Scævola*, with the same hand and sturdiness, endure the flame with which he committed the sin.

But alas! where lives that man that can thus reason, either sober, or in his wits? The principles of our nature will not bear it. *Belshazzar* had as much of power, and of drink withal, to raise him to bid defiance to God, as any ruffian under heaven; and yet, when God, as it were, lift but up his finger against him, how poorly did he crouch and shiver! how did his joints loose, and his knees knock together! So that if he felt God's hand so intolerable, when it did but write, what would he find it, when it should inflict the sentence. And therefore neither can this be the reason.

But now, if men both apprehend the curse, and believe the truth of it, and withal confess their utter inability to contest with it; what can be the reason, that any man can,

not have Christ's blood to instruct him with

with a contented mind, and a daring hand, proceed in such a strain of rebellion; believing, and yet despising the curse, fearing its weight, and yet defying the event? Why, the reason, I conceive, in short, is a presuming confidence of a future repentance.

This is the great mysterious engine of sin, that turns about the world, that reconciles all the contradictions of interest and religion, that solves all doubts, cuts off all demurs, that can assure a *Balaam* he shall *die the death of the righteous*, tho' he lives upon the wages of iniquity. It is this only that presents sin in some respect rational; that can make even conscience itself sign and seal the petitions of the basest appetite. In short, it works wonders: it unites the joys of heaven, and the pleasures of sin; the promises of God, and the precepts of the devil.

I shall not enforce this by any other probation, but by appealing to every man's own conscience; sending him to reflect upon himself, and to consider the temper of his spirit, the inward reasonings and debates of his mind, when he is allured to do any thing, of the unlawfulness of which he stands clearly convinced, whether he is not drawn forth to the actual commission of it, by presuming upon impunity, through the interposals of an after-repentance.

For, if conscience startles and flies back, and dreads the apple of the temptation, be-

cause God's word is peremptory, *He that eats shall die*; future repentance stands forth, and supplies the room, and retorts the answer of the devil, *Thou shalt not surely die*; nay, thou mayest repent, and surely live. So that repentance being now stamped as currant as perfect obedience, this argument is heightened much beyond what that of the devil was then capable of; because, indefinitely, without any restriction of time or person, God's promise of life to the penitent stands clear and irreversible.

Now what can speak more home and full to a man's desires, and, in a great measure, to his reason, than that which encourages him to crop the present sweets of sin, by giving him security against the future smart! Let the wine be never so poisonous, a man may safely drink it, when he has not only an appetite for its sweetness, but also an antidote against its poison.

This, this therefore is the very hinge upon which the whole persuasive force of sin turns and depends; the only temptation that seems unanswerable. Others, indeed, may allure; this alone argues a man into sin. And I desire to leave this with you, as an observation infallibly true, that, were it not for the persuasions of a future repentance, a knowing man could scarce ever be brought to sin against his conscience.

But

But now, if this be overthrown, and proved to be both absurd and dangerous, as I hope, some part of the ensuing discourse shall do, with clear, undeniable evidence, then all other temptations, that are but the meer appendices of this, will fall and vanish of themselves : as by confuting the main hypothesis of an opinion, all other arguments by consequence, drawn from thence, are also by consequence confuted.

Now the face of these words is directly set against this soul-devouring imposture of a deferred repentance. The words are short and cutting, full of a smart and reprehensive vehemency ; the word and the blow seems to go together.

In the prosecution of them, for a more methodical proceeding, it will be convenient to enquire into their occasion. For, since they are a command, and every command respects some person, to whom it is directed ; and, since this command is of repentance, which always relates to some sin to be repented of ; this enquiry will give us a fair insight and introduction into both.

First of all then, for the occasion of these words : if we have recourse to the 12th *verse*, we shall find that they are part of a letter, to the church of *Pergamos*, endited by the spirit of God, and directed to the angel of that church.

And here it will not be amiss briefly to consider what the angel of that church was. It is evident, that the church of *Pergamos* must be taken collectively, for many particular churches included in it; for that it should be but one particular church, considering the number of the persons, and the extent of the place, cannot, with any colour of sense or reason, be affirmed. By angel therefore must be understood that chief pastor, who had the supervisal and government of those particular churches, and the pastors of them contained within the compass of *Pergamos*; correspondent to a bishop among us, ruling over the particular churches and ministers of his diocese.

And the denomination of angel shews the divine justification of the office, it being in *Eccles. v. 6.* given to the *priest*, the chief ruler of the *Jewish* church. Neither can any instance be given of the name of angel, ascribed to any person employed about the church; but it imports a messenger from God. So that, I say, it is probable, that the word carries in it divine institution. But, however, both the word and the usage of it here imports Christ's owning and approbation of the office: and confirmation is a kind of after-insinuation; at least, it is no less authentick. But some reply, that the word angel may be applied here to some one pastor or presbyter, equal to the rest. To which I answer, that
it

it is highly improbable, that the spirit should address a message to one minister, who was but equal to the rest, and no more concerned in it than the rest, and that about a matter relating to all their churches.

But I add further, that this could not be ; for one pastor over a particular church has nothing to do to interpose and correct the abuses of other particular churches, which are severally under their own pastors and governors.

But now, the minister here spoke of, is blamed for the abuses of all the churches in *Pergamos*, and charged to rectify them ; which clearly imports, that he stood invested with a more general and extended jurisdiction. And this by the way, tho' yet it is no digression.

Having thus shewn who the person was to whom this letter was directed ; in the next place, we are to consider the subject-matter of the letter itself ; which contains in it these three things ; 1st, Commemoration of the virtues and graces that were eminent and resplendent in this church, in *ver.* 13. 2^{dly}, A charge for some sinful abuse, that had crept in, and was connived at in *ver.* 14. 3^{dly}, An advice upon the whole matter, which was speedy and immediate repentance,

In our present discourse we shall only be concerned in the two latter of these : And first, for the sinful abuse or scandal here charged upon this church ; it was its toleration

of that vile and impure sect of the *Nicolaitans*; These *Nicolaitans*, as their name imports, took their rise and denomination from one *Nicholas*, one of those seven deacons who were first ordained by the apostles, *Acts* vi. 5. Now their heresy consisted of these two branches; 1st, That they did assert the eating of sacrifices offered to idols, and that even in honour to those idols, to be lawful: 2^{dly}, That they held and abetted the lawfulness of fornication. So that their heresy was a complete system of all impiety; the first part containing the greatest spiritual, the latter the greatest carnal pollution.

In the 14th verse of this chapter, the spirit calls this heresy the *way of Balaam*; who, when he could not *curse*, fell to *counsel*; that is, to do a greater mischief; and advised *Balak* to cause the women of the *Moabites* to entice the children of *Israel* to the feasts of *Priapus*; in which the people sat down to eat, and drink, and afterwards rose up to play; that is, they first feasted upon the idol-sacrifices, and then finished the solemnity, with the impurities of lust. It seems, something of this nature was revived and practised by these impure hereticks; a strange thing, one would think, that so filthy an heresy should get ground in the very beginnings and first dawnings of the church, and in the purest times of christianity!

Yet

Yet thus it was. The brightest day may begin with a mist; and the best of churches is not privileged from corruptions: but it was not so much the churches having, as not animadverting upon these pests, that is here reprehended. They had their meetings by publick toleration and connivance: and this is that for which the spirit rounds them up with this short advice, armed and seconded with a severe commination.

Come we now to the next thing; which is, the counsel of speedy repentance, given upon this scandal, and contained in the words of the text; in which are these two parts:

1st, The first stands directed to the church itself: *Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly.* By God's *coming*, is meant his approach in the way of judgment; for so the word *coming* frequently signifies, both in the Old and New Testament. *Isaiah xxx. 27. The name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger.* And in *Psalms l. 8. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence*; that is, he shall come to judge and punish; or, as the usual phrase is, he shall come with a vengeance: for so the following words explain these; *A fire shall devour before him.*

In the same sense also is the word *coming* frequently used in the New Testament; which is well worth our observation, as being of signal use to rescue sundry places of scripture, that have been hitherto held under false and perverse interpretations.

In

In this sense is it taken in *Matth. xvi. 27.* where it is said, *that the son of man shall come in the glory of his father, with his holy angels, to reward every man according to his works;* which place tho' many understand of Christ's coming in his own person to judge all men at the end of the world, yet indeed it only signifies only his coming in the ministers of his wrath, to take vengeance of the *Jews* in the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

That this is so I evince by another parallel place, in *Matth. xxvi. 64.* where Christ, speaking of his coming, says, *αὐτὸς ἄρτι ὄψεται τοὺς ὑμῶν ἀνθρώπους ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τοὺς πετελοὺς τῆς ἡγορᾶς*, which word *αὐτὸς ἄρτι*, tho' we translate *hereafter*, yet it properly signifies *from now*; that is, within a very short time.

But yet more fully from that fore-mentioned place, in *Matth. xvi.* whereas in verse 27, he had said, *You shall see the son of man come with the glory of his father, and the holy angels.* He subjoins in the very next verse, *And verily there are some standing here, that shall not taste death till they see the son of man coming in his kingdom.*

What! did he mean that they should not die till the day of judgment? No? this was evidently false and impossible: but his meaning was, that some of the younger sort of his auditors should live to see the execution of his wrath upon the *Jews*, in the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

And this seems excellently to interpret a place

place that will hardly be understood without it, in *John* xxi. 22. where Christ says to *Peter*, concerning *John*, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* Here now the apostles minds running upon the last judgment, presently concluded that *John* should not die. But now take the word *coming* in this sense, and it gives a clear and apposite interpretation to the place; *John* being the only disciple who both saw and survived the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

But the only doubt that may occur here is this: How Christ could be said to *come* in the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was effected by the *Roman* armies: but the solution is easy. For when God, by his peculiar providence, raises up any instruments to execute his decrees or purposes upon any people or place, the actions of those persons are both usually and properly applied to God, as if he had done them immediately himself,

And for his coming with his holy angels, it is very probable, that when God brings a publick ruin and destruction upon a nation, he uses the ministry of angels, as well as the weapons of men. This seems clear to me from that place in *Dan*, x. 20. where the angel says to him, *Now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, lo the prince of Græcia shall come.* In like manner Christ might send his angels out to fight against *Judea*, before the coming of *Vespasian's* army.

And

And lastly for his coming in the clouds; he that shall read *Josephus*, and others concerning the *Jewish* History, will find what strange prodigious appearances there were in the sky, of armies fighting, and a flaming sword hanging over *Jerusalem*, a little before the *Romans* sacked and ruined that city. So that, all things being laid together, I cannot but conclude it more than probable, that this is the sense of the place.

A learned author, considering this sense of Christ's coming, judges that the whole book of the *Revelations*, in which that is so often spoke of, relates to things immediately to happen after the delivery of that prophecy; and, consequently, that it had its completion within two hundred years. And certain it is, that the very beginning of the book says, that it was to *deliver things shortly to come to pass*; and the last concluding chapter emphatically repeats this three times, *Behold I come quickly*.

Now, if the judgment of this learned man stands, as it hath both the countenance of reason and of the express words of the text; then what must become of the bloody tenets of those desperate wretches, who for these many years have been hammering of blood, confusion, and rebellion out of this book, from a new fancy that they have of Christ's coming. Thus ruling their lives not by precepts but prophecies; and not being able to find any warrant for their actions, in the clear and express

press word of law or gospel, they endeavour to shelter their villainies in the obscurities and shades of the *Revelation*; a book intricate and involved, and for the most part never to be understood; and upon which, when wit and industry has done it utmost, the best comment is but conjecture. And thus much for the first part of the words that stands directed by the church, *Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly.*

2dly, The other part of the words relates to those hereticks; *And I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth*; that is, with the reprehending discovering force of the word, and the censures of the church; where, for the credit and divine authority of the ministry, Christ owns that for the sword of his own mouth, which was only delivered by theirs.

Now we must observe, that as the spirit had called this heresy *the way of Balaam*, so the judgment here pronounced is still with allusion to that of *Balaam*; whom as the angel of God met with a drawn sword, to divert him from his course, so God here threatens to meet these hereticks with the curse and terrors of the law, and the spiritual sword of his word.

And every obstinate sinner must know, that it is God that meets him face to face, that withstands and pleads with him in the word as with a drawn sword; and therefore, if he

is

is resolved to persist and hold on his course, he must of necessity run upon the sword's point, the very pike of divine vengeance, and resolve to fight it out with God and all his judgments; or, by a penitential prudence, fairly consult his safety in his duty and retreat.

Now, from this expression here used, *I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth*, I collect these two occasional observations.

1st, That the word of God, powerfully dispensed, has the force and efficacy of a spiritual sword. For as a sword has both a glittering radiance and brightness to strike and terrify the eye, and also an edge to pierce the flesh; so the word, being drawn forth and brandished by a skilful hand, darts a convincing light into the understanding, and with an irresistible edge enters the heart and the affections.

It is not like the song of one that has a pleasant voice, that only strikes the ear, gratifies the fancy, and courts those affections which it should command. But when the word comes from God, it comes with such a searching, invincible quickness, such a spiritual keenness, that it shall cut and make its way through the hardest heart, and not find admittance by mere petition, or precarious suasion; for a sword never enters by entreaty.

And, for men's encouragement to attend upon this ordinance, take the proudest and the

the stoutest sinner upon earth, and God is able, with his word alone, to fetch him upon his knees, and to lay him in the dust. Take the stubbornest and the knottiest corruption of the most depraved heart, and God is able, with the sword of his mouth, to hew it asunder. And when Providence shall place a man under the dint of such a ministry, he will find the work short and speedy; it will quickly send him away converted, or inexcusable.

2dly, From hence I observe, when God undertakes the purging of a church, or the reformation of religion, he does it with the weapons of religion, with the *sword of his mouth*. Shew me any one text in the whole book of God, especially since the spirit of meekness took place in the introduction of christianity, where God commissions any man, at least any subject, to correct the abuses of religion with fire and sword, and to dispute the articles of his faith in the high places of the field. For, in such cases, if his conscience will not suffer him to obey, the same conscience will as strongly oblige him to suffer. And therefore, tho' the truths, the worship, nay the person itself of Christ should be invaded, yet let *Peter* put up his sword, and let Christ employ his own, even this *sword of his mouth*, which is sharper and better, and able much more powerfully to reach and affect the ear without cutting it off.

And

And I am persuaded that the great reformation that God intends to bring over the christian world, in the last and best days of the church, shall not be effected with *confused noise, and garments rolled in blood*, with fire and faggot, but Christ shall do it silently, yet powerfully, by the *brightness of his coming*. As the rising sun chases away the darkness, without noise indeed, but yet without resistance.

So that whatsoever *trash or stubble* shall be built upon the foundation of the *eternal word of God*, swords and spears, weapons heterogeneous to these things, shall not be employed for their removal, but they shall insensibly vanish and moulder away before the prevailing efficacy of the everlasting gospel. As a skilful disputant does not cut off the fallacious argument of his opponent, by fretting, and fuming, and speaking loud, but by a calm, sedate reducing it to the rules of argumentation, just so it is here, where Christ shall subdue his enemies, not by combat, but discovery. *And then* the promises being fulfilled, in the universal propagation of the gospel, Jesus Christ shall reign as *king of kings, and lord of lords*, and that without deposing of other princes. And if God be true, and christianity no imposture, whensoever this is brought about, it will be in this manner; for the whole dispensation of the gospel, whether

offen-

offensive or defensive, or must needs be entirely spiritual.

And thus having finished the general explanation of the words, I shall now descend to a more particular prosecution of the principal design of them, which is to enforce the duty of immediate repentance; and this I shall do in these two things.

1st, I shall shew what that repentance is, that is here enjoined.

2^{dly}, I shall produce arguments to enforce the necessity of its immediate exercise.

1st, For the first of these: Since divinity has been so much spun into disputation, repentance is a thing almost as difficult in the notion as it is in the practice. There are three words in scripture to express it by, μεταμέλεια, μετάνοια & ἰσχυροφῆ; tho' this last rather signifies *conversion*. The first, which is μεταμέλεια, denotes an anxiety or displeasure of mind, upon something done amiss, to which answers the *Latin pœnitentia*; the second, which is μετάνοια, signifies a total change or transmutation of the mind, to which answers *resipiscencia*.

Now between these two some make this difference; that the former signifies either the whole of an ineffectual repentance, or only the beginning of such an one as, in the issue, proves saving and effectual; and that the latter signifies the whole work of such an one as is sound, and effectual to salvation.

It must be here confessed, that according to the strict and rigid acceptation of the word, *μεταμέλεια*, is only that trouble, regret, or anxiety of mind for the evil of pass'd actions, which is rather a preparative to repentance, than the work itself, and consequently being rested in cannot save; and, on the other side, *μετανοια*, signifies strictly, a change of mind, which in the matter of sin proves to be saving.

This, I say, is the proper and strict signification of the words; but since we can determine nothing of them in a scripture way from their literal *meaning*, but only from their use and acceptation there, which in several instances may be easily shewn to be promiscuous, we cannot make their native literal *force* any solid ground for such a distinction. Wherefore leaving all weak and unwarrantable deductions from the first signification of the *Latin* or *Greek* words, you may observe that repentance in scripture has a threefold acceptation.

1st, It is taken for the first act by which the soul turns from sin to God; the first dividing stroke that separates between sin and the heart; the first step and advance that a sinner makes to holiness; the first endeavours and throws of a new birth.

2^{dly}, It is taken for the whole course of a pious life, comprising the whole actions a man performs, from first to last inclusively; from his first turning from a wicked life to the last
period

period of a godly. This is the only repentance that *Socinus* will admit; and some others, who would pretend to bring something new, but only transcribe from him in this particular.

Now such as own this assertion, find themselves under a necessity to assert also, that faith and repentance are the same things, and differ only in the manner of our conception.

So that the whole obedience of our lives, as it is a turning from sin to God; properly bears the name of repentance; but then as this obedience and turning to God proceeds from a belief of the promises and precepts of Christ, so they say it is properly stiled faith. Whence repentance and faith, according to them, are only two different denominations fixed upon the same thing, as it sustains different respects.

But that this is not the proper notion of repentance is clear from these reasons:

1st, Because, if repentance be properly the whole entire course of gospel-obedience, from the first to the last of a man's life, then no man could properly be said to have repented, till such time as he had actually finished such a course of obedience; that is, not till his death; which to assert, is a strange paradox, and contrary to the general apprehensions of men upon this subject.

2^{dly}, The scripture, no less than the natural reason of the thing itself, places repentance before faith, *Matth. xxi. 32. And ye, when*

ye had seen it repented not, that ye might afterwards believe in him. Here we see repentance is made the antecedent condition of faith: But now, should repentance grasp in the whole series and course of gospel-obedience, to the last period of our lives, how were it possible for faith to follow repentance, unless we should begin to believe in another world?

3dly, The scripture makes all those subsequent acts of new obedience after our first turning to God, not to be the *integral constituent parts*, but the *effects, fruits, and consequents* of repentance. *Matth. iii. 8. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.* But to make the fruit part of the tree itself is certainly a thing very preposterous.

I conclude, therefore, that repentance is not formally the whole course of new obedience, but that first act by which a man turns from sin to God. But then this I also add, that though it is not *formally*, yet it is *virtually* and *consequentially* so. That is in plain terms: Repentance is not itself this course of new obedience, but it does infer and produce it, and that as its inseparable effect or consequent: so that if this new obedience does not follow in the course of a man's whole conversation, after his first turning to God, he must conclude that that act was *spurious* and *unsound*; and that indeed it never truly and thoroughly brought him off from sin, whatsoever solemnity of sorrow, tears,

tears, and confession it might be attended with.

Let him fast, and whip himself, and run barefoot, and mumble out a thousand *misere mei's*, like some ignorant formalists, who, the truth is, know not what repentance means, as being utterly strangers to the spirit of the gospel. Or, let him pray and weep, and hang down his head like a bullrush, go softly, and look sourly; yet if a change pass not upon his life and actions, so that instead of his accustomed wickedness, the whole tract of his conversation is drawn forth in a constant, equable practice of the contrary virtues, that man must know that he has not repented. He has, perhaps, deluded himself, and deceived others, stopped the cries of conscience, and the clamours of men; but repented he has not; and fearful were his case, should God snatch him out of the world in that condition.

3dly, Repentance is taken for a man's turning to God after the guilt of some particular sin. It differs from the former thus: that the former is from a state of sin; this latter only from a sinful act. No repentance precedes the former, but this supposes a true repentance to have gone before. Thus *Peter* is said, after his denial of Christ, to have *been converted*, *Luke xxii.* that is, to have repented; not but that *Peter* was a true penitent and convert before: but upon so sad and

notorious a fall, he was, by a renewed exercise of repentance, to disentangle himself from the guilt of that particular sin of denying his master.

This repentance, therefore, builds upon the former; and it is that which is here intended in the words. For the church of *Pergamos* was in favour with God, and consequently must needs have repented before, as is clearly collected from that elogy the spirit gives it in *Luke xxii. 13. Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.* But by reason of this scandal permitted and connived at, it was to cleanse itself from this stain by a renewed fresh act of humiliation.

The distinction, therefore, between these two kinds of repentance is carefully to be observed. The first passes but once upon the soul, the latter is to be frequent, indeed continual. *Naaman* washed off the leprosy of his body but once, but the soil of his hands every day.

And thus much concerning the nature of the repentance here spoke of; which being enjoined under pain of a speedy judgment, in case of omission it follows, that the command was not indefinitely of any kind of repentance, but only of such an one as was present and immediate.

Come we therefore to the second thing proposed, which is to produce arguments to engage

gage us in the speedy and immediate exercise of this duty.

1st, The first argument against a deferred repentance shall be taken from this consideration, that no man can be secure of the future. Neither, indeed, will men act as if they were in things that concern this life, for no man willingly defers his pleasures.

And did men here well compute the many frailties of nature, and further add the contingencies of chance, how quickly a disease from within, or a blow from without, may tear down the strongest constitution, certainly they would ensure eternity upon something else than a *life as uncertain* as the air that feeds it. Do you not think, that that young man that brought *David* that feigned traiterous message, did not set forth in good hearty plight in the morning? and yet before sun-set the vengeance of God overtook, and slew him in his sin.

God tells the sinner, he must repent to-day; he now thinks with himself, that he can contrive the matter more wisely, and defer his repentance to some of those years into which his present health seems to give him a long prospect.

And now, is it not just with God to smite such an one in the infatuation of such counsels, and to convince him, that God spoke good reason when he told him, that immediate repentance was necessary?

And, indeed, the providence of God, for the most part, orders the matter so, that such are snatched and hurried away to judgment on a sudden, when they have power to repent of nothing but this, that they had not repented before. See how God deals with that servant, that deferred his repentance upon a supposed delay of his master's coming, *Matth. xxiv. 50, 51. The lord of that servant shall come in an hour that he looked not for him, and cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites.* God's grace will not always dance attendance upon obstinate resolved hypocrites; for this were, as if the sun of mercy should stand still over their heads, at their beck and command, while they are fighting against heaven.

Should God open the book of his decrees, and give a man a prospect into the secrets of futurity, and shew him his death sealed and appointed at such a day, and such an hour, he might then, indeed, with some more reason, enjoy the present, and set apart some few days to make his peace with God, and set his soul in order before he died. But this is a privilege that God vouchsafes to none, and that upon the highest reason; for if he should, it would destroy religion.

Wherefore, since this is a secret, like God's dearest attributes incommunicable, locked up from the curious prying inspection of all created knowledge, with what reason can any
man

man build his life, his happiness, his eternity upon such a repentance, as hovers upon the uncertain slippery conjectures of a supposed futurity?

Ordinary experience observed would unwitch men as to these delusions. Did you ever see any man arrested, but it was before he was aware? A man would not willingly have his friend take him in a surprize, much less then his greatest enemy, death and judgment. Possibly God may strike him in the very eagerness and perpetration of his sin. Thus he sent *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, in the heat of their schism and rebellion, quick into hell. *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were struck dead with a lie in their mouths. *Zimri* and *Cosbi*, in the very act of uncleanness, were dispatched into another world.

And let that man, who promises to himself a future repentance, and upon that confidence proceeds to sin, shew me any solid satisfactory reason, why God may not, in the same manner, cashier him in the very commission of that sin that he is designing. And then, whether it would not be the grimmest dispensation that ever befel him, to be thrust out of the world with his sins about his ears; and so to be brought, as it were, in the very heat and steam of his offence, to render up an account for it at God's tribunal, before he had scarce finished the commission.

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The events of to-morrow are neither within the compass of our understanding to know, or of our power to dispose of: *wherefore* the advice of the spirit, concerning the time of our repentance, is the same with that of *St. Austin*, who counselled his friend to repent a day before he died; which, proceeding upon terms of rational certainty, is to repent to-day.

2dly, The second argument shall be taken from this consideration, that, supposing the allowance of time, yet we cannot be sure of power to repent. It is very possible, that by the insensible encroachments of sin a man's heart may be so hardened, as to have neither power nor will to repent, though he has time and opportunity. He that is unwilling to-day, will, undoubtedly, be more unwilling to-morrow. And the reason is evident, because his present unwillingness proceeds from that hold that sin has got upon his will already: but this every hour increases, and gets further ground upon it; so that sin being increased, unwillingness to repent, the proper effect and consequent of sin, must needs be increased in an equal proportion.

The longer the heart and sin converse together, the more familiar they will grow; and then, the stronger the familiarity, the harder the separation. Does any one think, he has his heart so in his hand as to say, thus far will I sin, and there will I leave off? Such an one shews, indeed, that he neither
under-

understands the nature of sin, nor of his heart.

How that that which now creeps and begs for entrance, having once got admission, will command and domineer; and like that emperor, though it gets into power like a fox, yet it will manage it, and reign like a lion. Neither does he know those many windings and turnings, the sly excuses and glossing apologies, that the heart will suggest to rescue its sin from the summons of repentance, being once endeared and bound fast to it by inveterate continuance.

The commission of sin is like the effusion of water, easily contained in its bounds, but uncontrollable in its course. We indeed may give it vent, but God alone knows where it will stop. Is not that man therefore stupidly ignorant, who chuses to encounter his sin by a future repentance? Reason would argue and discourse thus: If I find that I have scarce power enough to resist my sin at present, shall I not have much less when time shall give it growth and strength, and, as it were, knit its joints, and render it unconquerable?

It is here as with a man in a combat; every blow his adversary gives him, disables him for the very next resistance. A man at first finds the beginnings and little inconveniences of a disease, but physick is unpleasant; and withal, he finds himself in a good competence of strength at present, and therefore he
resolves

resolves to wear it out ; but in the mean time his distemper eats on its way, and grows upon him, till at length he has not so much as strength to bear physick, but his disease quickly runs him down, and becomes incurable.

A man at first is strong, and his sin is weak, and he may easily break the neck of it by a mature repentance ; but his own deluding heart tells him, that he had better repent hereafter ; that is, when, on the contrary, he himself is deplorably weak, and his sin invincibly strong.

Commission of sin may indeed wound, but it is continuance of sin that kills. A man, by falling to the ground, may, perhaps, get a bruise or a knock ; but by lying upon the ground after he is fallen, he may chance to catch his death.

And now, does not that man's heart give him wise and wholesome counsel, that bids him baulk the present, and fix upon the future ? But still, as the desires of sin are impious, so its discourses are irrational. And what a dreadful thing is it for a man, in the grand concernment of his repentance, in the great deciding cast for eternity, to relinquish the word, and to consult his heart ? whereas the word cannot, and his heart cannot but deceive him.

The prophet *Elisba*, 2 *Kings* viii. 12. told *Hazael*, knowing his design to murder his prince, that his villany would not stop there, but

but that he would proceed so far as to wreak his fury upon sucking infants, and to rip up women with child. But his heart in the mean while, which possibly at that very time, together with the sin, had designed its repentance, that perswaded him another thing, and makes him reply with resent and wonder, *What ! am I dog that I should do these things ?* And questionless, at that time, he little believed that he could be so wicked ; but we know, that the event shews whether *Elisha* or his heart were the truer prophet. For as soon as he had committed his first great leading sin, and his hand was well in, and hot in the work, his corruption rages and swells higher and higher, and his heart serves him for the utmost execution of all those villanies, that at a distance he himself abhorred, and judged incredible.

And how does that man know, that has built all upon his resolves of repentance hereafter, but that he, who now trembles at the first approach of a temptation, and can discern the insensible progress of his corruption, so that upon the very first rising and moving of the heart to sin, his conscience smites him, remorse pursues, troubles, and disquiets him ; the same, within a while after his conscience has worn off those restrictions, and becomes hardened and steeled with custom in sinning, may lash on furiously and audaciously, with an *high hand* and *bare face*,
against

against the grudges of conscience, the terrors of God, and the shame of the world; till at length he ends a wretched course in irrecoverable perdition; unless God in mercy steps in, and by a potent over-ruling hand of conviction rebukes the rage of his corruption, and says, thus far it shall come, and no further.

But now, as in the very course of a natural cause, continuance in sin hardens against repentance; as a man that is out of his way, if he be far gone, will be hardly brought to return, but will venture over hedge and ditch, and wade through any difficulty rather than endure the irksome ingrateful trouble of a retreat; so we must further know,

That repentance is entirely in God's disposal. This grace is in the soul from God, as light is in the air from the sun, by continual emanation; so that God may shut or open his hand, contract or diffuse, set forth or suspend the influence of it as he pleases. And if God gives not repenting grace, there will be an hard heart, and a dry eye, maugre all the poor frustraneous endeavours of nature. A piece of brass may as easily melt, or a flint bewater itself, as the heart of man, by any innate power of its own, resolve itself into a penitential humiliation. If God does not, by an immediate blow of his omnipotence, strike the rock, these waters will never gush out.

The

The spirit blows where it listeth, and if that blows not, these showers can never fall.

And now, if the matter stands so, how does the impenitent sinner know but that God, being provoked by his present impenitence, may irreversibly propose within himself, to seal up these fountains, and shut him up under hardness of heart and reprobation of sense? and then farewell all thoughts of repentance for ever. See this sadly exemplified in *Pharaoh*. He had time enough to repent, day after day; but yet he never did repent: for it is expressly said, that *God hardened his heart*; that is, he with-held his grace. See the children of *Israel* in the same case, in *Psalms lxxxi*.

11. *My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me*; that is, they peremptorily refused God's present call to repentance. What follows? why, in the next verse, *So I gave them up to their own hearts lusts; and they walked in their own hearts*: that is, they *would not* repent, and therefore God, in effect, tells them, that they should not repent; but leaves them to the delusions of a besotted mind, and the desperate, incorrigible estate of a final impenitence.

3dly, In the third and last place, the duty of immediate repentance may be enforced upon this reason; that, admitting a man has both time and grace to repent, yet, by such delay, the work will be incredibly more difficult. The longer a debt lies unpaid, the greater

greater it grows ; and, not discharged, is quickly multiplied. The sin to be repented of will be the greater, and power and strength to repent by, will be less. And tho' a man escapes death, the utmost effect of his distemper, yet, certainly, he will find it something to be cut and scarified, and launced, and to endure all the tortures of a deferred cure.

And is it not better for a man, in the business of repentance, to rise up early, and take the morning of his years before him, while these heavenly penitential dews fall kindly and naturally, than when his day is far spent, and the heat of temptation has scorched them off from his heart, and they are gone ; and he must be forced to struggle for every tear, to pump for every drop, to recover and refresh his languishing, and otherwise dying soul ? I say, is it not much better, while his conscience is tender, and apt to relent under every motion and impression of the word, while his wound is green, and his heart bleeds yet afresh, to stop the bloody issue of sin with the healing balsam of a bleeding Saviour, applied quick and warm, by a speedy humiliation.

By a single commission of sin, a blot falls upon the soul ; but, by continuance, it soaks into it. And when once sin comes to have that desperate symptom of being inveterate, an ordinary repentance will not serve turn. The stain must lie and steep a great while longer ;

longer; the brine must be sharper, and the repentance severer, before the soul can be recovered to its first whiteness and integrity.

God, who at first might have been won by entreaties, must now be wrestled with; and a man suffer many foils and repulses in his spiritual conflict, endure many bitter agonies, pass under much darkness and doubt, as to the whole matter of his eternal condition, before he can recover upon his heart a sense of God's lost favour. And, perhaps, when at length it does return, it is but weak and imperfect, mingled with much fear, and spiritual dissatisfaction. As when the clouds have spread themselves thick and dark over the face of the whole heavens, the showers must fall, and it may continue raining for many days before you can so much as see the sun; and when at length he shines forth, yet it is but waterishly, and through the cloud, with a dim, uncomfortable brightness: just so is it with a sinner in his deferred repentance.

O remember *David*, his roarings and cryings, his broken bones, his mournful days, and his sleepless nights. Why, what was the cause of all this? In *Psalms xxxviii. My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness.* They festered and grew noysome, only by his foolish deferring of the cure. For all agree, that it was near a year, that *David* lay in his two great sins, before he repented.

But on the contrary, in *Peter*, who fol-

lowed his sin close at the heels, who rose betimes to his work ; as soon as ever the cock crew, and the alarm was given, we find that the matter of controversy was quickly taken up between Christ and him : and being thus converted, he had the honour to strengthen his brethren, and to be the great leading man, and captain of the apostles.

Consider, therefore, that the speedy penitent has a much fairer reception and easier discharge from God, than he that lingers ; whose repentance, tho' it may prove sincere, yet it still comes with this degrading circumstance, that a delayed courtesy does *diu noluit*.

We know, he that brings ready money has a thing much cheaper than another, together with an overplus of more credit and esteem into the bargain. In like manner the late penitent, like the late paymaster, tho' by such a repentance he may secure himself from the final arrests of damnation ; yet still it is something fordid and degenerateous.

Consider also, that God is so much pleased with an early penitence, that he is ready to accept that which is in itself a duty, as a gift ; at least, to reward it for such. Besides, he that is slow to attempt this great work, tho' his repentance may be real and sincere, yet he will scarce be able to know that it is so ; and then, tho' his condition may be sure, yet his comfort cannot be entire ; but, tho' he is at peace with God, yet he will hardly
be

be at peace with himself : in the mean time the early penitent has repentance, with these two incredible advantages, he repents with facility, and with certainty. I have now done : you have heard the duty, and the arguments to enforce it ; how that the neglect of it, is a bold venture upon God's justice : and that no man can be sure of time and opportunity to repent ; nor, admitting this, can he promise himself grace and ability to execute this work : and lastly, supposing that he has both, yet the work will be trebly more difficult and laborious, and at the best, uncomfortable and dubious. Add to this, that God may thunder out his judgments ; which will overtake and force us to mend our pace : and, because we would not repent upon a fairer invitation, force us to lie down and repent in shame, poverty and sickness ; and to heighten spiritual desertions with temporal afflictions.

Since this is so, I shall wrap up all in that advice of the prophet *Amos* to *Israel*, in the fourth chapter, verse 12. *Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel ; and because I will do this unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel !* As for any other application, since deductions from the words are natural and easy, I shall leave it to your own thoughts ; and indeed these truths are of that nature, that he that really believes them, cannot but apply them.

S E R M O N VII.

REVEL. ii, 16.

Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

AS before I enforced the duty of immediate repentance, and disputed against the deferring of it, by arguments drawn from the unreasonableness of such a course; so now, I shall further proceed against it, from a consideration of the strong, peculiarly provoking nature of this sin, above all others; tho', indeed, in propriety of speech, impenitence cannot be called a sin, but rather a collection and combination of sins, or a sinful state and condition.

But certain it is, that there is nothing that kindles the Divine Wrath to such a flame, as the delayed exercise of the great duty of repentance. We find not such fierce expressions

sions of vengeance against any sinner, as the spirit of God, in *Deut.* xxix. 20, 21. discharges against him that obstinately delayed his repentance. It is said, 'that God will
' not spare him: that the anger of the Lord,
' nay, his jealousy, which is the very sting
' and poison of his anger, shall smoke against
' that man; that all the curses of the law,
' shall lie upon him; that God shall blot out
' his name from under heaven; and lastly,
' that he shall even separate him to evil, according to all the curses of the covenant.'

Now, what could have been said so fully, with such a copiousness of terror? every word almost carrying in it fire and brimstone; every period being, as it were, pregnant with death, and breathing out destruction: and yet we may be sure, that every tittle shall be verified. God rather over-does his words, than under-speaks his actions: and his performances are always commensurate to his expressions.

But both, we see, light heavy upon the lingering penitent; whose sin, I conceive, is so eminently and signally provoking to God, upon these reasons;

1st, Because it is the abuse of a remedy. Since sin entered into the world, there is nothing but repentance can stand between the sinner and certain destruction. It is the only *asylum* and place of refuge, that God has provided for malefactors. If mercy had not found this expedient, every man had been

the deplorable object of a remorseless, vindictive justice. Now, for a sinner to neglect this, to slight and trample upon the conditions of pardon, what is it else, but as if a man, that lay gasping under a mortal wound, should both throw away the balsam, and defy the physician?

Certainly, it cannot but be the highest provocation, to see guilt kick at mercy; and presumption take advantage merely from a redundancy of compassion. He that will fight it out, and not surrender, only because he has articles of peace offered to him, deserves to feel the sword of an unmerciful enemy. A delayed repentance is a downright defiance to mercy. And every moment a man spends under such a delay, he falls under that character of *Babylon*, *Jerem. li. 9. that God would have healed him; but yet he was not healed*: and that for no other cause, than that he pursues, chuses, and even woes death, and solicits his own *destruction*.

2dly, The reason why God is exasperated by our delaying this duty, is, because it clearly shews, that a man does not love it, as a duty, but only intends to use it for an expedient of escape. It is not because it is pleasing to God, grateful to an offended majesty, or because he apprehends a worth and excellency in the thing itself; for then he would set about it immediately: for love is quick and active; and desire hates all delay.

But

But a man is enamoured with his sin, and resolves to take his full course in the satisfaction of his lusts, to consult his pleasure, and to sacrifice the vigour of his years, to the gratification of his appetite, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life; and all those other sinful vanities that are apt to bewitch the heart of man.

This, I say, he resolves; but, in regard the rear of such a course is brought up with a sad and fatal account at the last; all ending in eternal wrath and damnation: that he may now escape this, and come off clear, he will repent just at the last; and so, by that means, as this life has given him the pleasures of sin, repentance shall interpose and rescue him from the fruits and effects of sin.

And is not this a neat design, to live with pleasure, and yet die with peace? to provoke God's justice all the time of one's life, and then fairly to slip from it, by repenting some minutes before death?

But it is not to be wondered at, if God's fury rises at such a course; for it evidently turns his grace into wantonness, and makes it drudge and subserve to the design of sin. For he that resolves only to secure himself by repenting at the last, at the same time also resolves to continue sinning all the mean while. Which is nothing else but an endeavour to put a trick upon God; to affront him to his face; and yet to despise him under the protections of his own mercy.

Tho' the allowance of repentance be an infinitely gracious concession, yet we are mistaken if we think that the entire design of it is only the sinner's interest, and not God's glory, as well as his salvation. God intends repentance to be a means to purify the heart from that corruption that renders it utterly unserviceable. Repentance, tho' it cannot deserve, yet it must qualify the soul for heaven. And this penitential cleansing, tho' it merits nothing, yet it is a necessary condition to fit a man to be a vessel of honour. In short, repentance is chiefly valued by God, because he loves the fruits of repentance.

But now, he that declines the present exercise of it, and throws it back to the future, *he evidently shews*, that whensoever he takes it up, he does it solely for the interest of his own safety, and not to pay any retribution of honour to God; and that he repents, not to *cleanse* but to *secure*, not to *sanctify* but to *defend himself*.

3dly, A third reason that God's displeasure so implacably burns against this sin is, because it is evidently a counterplotting of God, and being wise above the prescribed methods of salvation, to which God makes the immediate dereliction of sin necessary.

But he that defers his repentance makes this his principle, to live a sinner, and to die a penitent.

But

But to what purpose does God command repentance, if it must be in the power of man to chuse the time of it, and so to elude the duty itself, by the circumstance of its performance? It is to no end for God to give a law, if a man may interpret the sense, and so shuffle off the obligation. He that is commanded to repent, and defers it to the future, *declares* that he will be obliged by that command only when he thinks fit, and not before. He also looks upon it as a refined, subtle piece of policy, to chuse such a repentance as has a longer consistency with sinful pleasure, and yet no less efficacy as to the procurement of salvation, than such an one as is present and immediate.

And now, may we not imagine that such a course is highly offensive? in which a poor weak man shall endeavour to vie wisdom with his Maker, to outwit and outreach an Omniscience?

When he shall thus find a new and a shorter way to heaven, cutting off those austerities of life as superfluous, which God has vouched necessary, and so derogating from God's knowledge; withal, making those allowances and indulgencies lawful which God has denied as destructive, and so upbraiding his goodness.

Briefly, a deferred repentance is a contradiction to God's word, and an impudent affront to all his attributes. He that hears
God's

God's counsel but follows his own, that repents at his leisure, and so makes his practice over-rule his belief; he has changed his deity, and tho' he confesses a God, yet he adores himself.

And thus I have shewn the grounds upon which the delay of this duty is so highly provoking to God; which ought to serve for another invincible argument against it, to all those that value his love, and tremble at his wrath.

But now to descend from the general nature of this subject to a consideration of it in particular. The grand instance of it is a death-bed repentance; concerning the efficacy of which, since there are so many disputes, and since the right stating of it is a matter of so high consequence, we will enter into a more exact and particular discussion of it; which I shall endeavour to manage under these two heads:

I. I shall resolve this great case of conscience, whether a death-bed repentance ever is, or can be effectual to salvation.

II. I shall shew, that supposing it may prove effectual, yet for any one to design it, and to build upon it before-hand, is highly dangerous, and therefore absolutely irrational.

And when I shall have dispatched these two things, I suppose there can be nothing

considerable in this subject that will be left unspoken to.

I. And first, for the first of these, whether or no a death-bed repentance may be effectual.

There are some who absolutely deny it, and explode it as the very bane of piety, and utterly destructive of an holy life; and therefore by no means can be brought to open the doors of heaven to such penitents. The reasons why such a repentance cannot be effectual are these:

1st, Because a good life is all along the Gospel required by Christ, as indispensably necessary to salvation; but a death-bed repentance cannot be productive of this, and therefore it cannot save. The first is evident from sundry places of scripture, as in *Matth. vii. 21. Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, but he that does the will of my father shall be blessed;* and *John xiv. 21. If ye love me keep my commandments;* and *Phil. ii. 12. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;* with several other places; which proclaim aloud, that there can be no admission into glory without the obedience of an holy life.

And the assumption that a death-bed repentance can produce no such thing, seems no less evident. For is it possible for a man to lead a new life when he is even ceasing to live? Can he work out his salvation when the fatal
night

night of death is seizing upon him, and he cannot work?

Now since this is the condition upon which salvation depends, and since this condition cannot be performed upon a man's death-bed, it follows that all repentance that is acted there must be utterly ineffectual, as to all purposes of salvation. And thus much for the first argument.

2dly, The second is this, which tho' it may be brought under the former, yet, for the more perspicuity, I shall propose it distinctly and by itself. You may take it thus:

The only thing within the power of a dying penitent, is a sincere purpose of a good life, and a resolution to amend; but this is not sufficient to save, and consequently, being the utmost that he can do, it follows that he can do nothing effectual to salvation. For the clearing of this we must observe, that whatsoever is only purposed is for that very reason as yet not done, but to be done hereafter, and then the argument proceeds in this manner: Either the leading of a new life, here purposed by the death-bed penitent, is necessary actually to be done, or it is not necessary. If it be not necessary to be done, then neither is there any reason why it should be necessary to be purposed; inasmuch as action is both the cause, the end, and also the measure of purpose: but if it be necessary to be done, then it follows that barely to purpose it cannot be sufficient.

And

And thus, from these arguments, they infer and conclude the absolute nullity of a death-bed repentance.

But, for my part, I cannot be yet convinced that there is an absolute necessity to reprobate all death-bed penitents, and to exclude them from all possibility of being saved. It is an assertion harsh and inhuman, and at the very first sight seems to carry in it a contrariety to the merciful and tender spirit of the gospel; and therefore ought not to be admitted, but upon most clear and unavoidable reasons, and such as yet I see none to enforce it,

For the first general exception; that it naturally undermines the necessity of a good life, and takes away all strictness and holiness of conversation, and so turns the gospel into a doctrine of licentiousness; making it to warrant and patronize a continuance in sin, from the assurance it gives to men, that, upon such a repentance, they shall be saved at the very last.

To this I answer, first, by concession; that if we state all a man's actions in things spiritual, upon a perfect entire freedom of will, by which it is in his power to repent when he will, after he has persisted in his sin as long as he pleased; so that he is so perfect a master of his choice, as to be able to determine it to sin, or to the practice of holiness, at any time whatsoever: I say, upon this principle I confess, that it does in a great measure unty and
un-

unravel all obligations to an holy life. And supposing that a man were sure of the time of his life, and that it should not, by any unexpected accident, be snapped off suddenly, the doctrine of the efficacy of a death-bed, or indeed of any future repentance, would in its nature tend to encourage such a man to a presumptuous perseverance in sin, *But then*, considering that (as I have *evinced* already) no man has his life leased to him for any set time, nor secured from casual fatal accidents, but that he may lose it unawares: even this principle itself, of a free entire power in man to repent when he will, cannot, upon a rational account, warrant any man either in the delay of a pious, or in the pursuit of a virtuous life.

But then I add; that repentance is not to be stated upon the power of man's will, but upon the special grace and power of God, by which it is wrought upon the heart, whereby the will is advanced to exert those acts of repentance which of itself it is utterly unable to do. *Now*, upon this principle I affirm, that to hold that a death-bed repentance may be effectual, neither cuts off the necessity of a good life, nor indeed encourages any one to defer his repentance till that time.

For, as I shall venture to tell any man, that if in the very last period, the last expiring instant of his life, he shall sincerely repent him of all his past sins, he shall assuredly find mercy;
sq

so I shall tell him also, that it is entirely in the pleasure and hand of God, whether he shall be able to repent or no; and that he has no certainty in the world that God will vouchsafe him such a measure of grace at that hour; but much, on the contrary, to make him suspect and doubt that he may deny it him, and revenge the provocations of a wicked life with impenitence and obduration at the time of death.

And thus I think that the exception against the efficacy of a death-bed repentance is clearly removed, by stating the exercise of it upon this principle. For tho' I say, that a man shall be saved *whensoever* he repents, yet I deny also, that a man can repent *whensoever* he pleases.

Having thus made our way through this general objection, we are now to look back upon those two arguments that were brought against this doctrine.

1st, The first was; That no repentance can be saving, but such an one as produces an holy life, and is attended with it; but how can a man, upon his death-bed, begin an holy life, when he is even ceasing to live?

To this I answer, That the space between the first act of repentance, by which the soul is turned from sin to God, and between a man's death, be it never so short, even to but one minute, it is reckoned in the accounts of the gospel for an holy life; that is, any
time

time that a sanctified person lives, is an holy life.

Now that this is so I thus evince; for either this is sufficient, or there is required some determinate space of time, under the compass of which no man can be said to have lived holily: if this be asserted, let that fixed determinate compass of time be assigned.

Either it must be the major part of a man's life, or a just half of it, or some set number of years or days.

If the first; then he that repents and is converted in the fifteenth year of his age, and dies in the thirtieth, cannot be said to have lived an holy life, and therefore cannot be saved, inasmuch as the major part of his life does not come under the accounts of repentance. In like manner, he that is converted in the twentieth year of his age, and dies before he reaches his fortieth, must come under the same doom, as not being able to bring the just half of his life under this reckoning.

But this is evidently false and absurd; we must therefore seek for this stinted time in some set number of years or days; and here let any one shew me, whether it be twelve, ten, six, or four, or one year; or, to descend to days, whether it be an hundred, sixty, thirty, ten, or seven days, that a man must have completely spent in the practice of holy duties, before he can be said to have lived an holy life; but I believe it would puzzle any one

one to make such an assignation, or to find warrant for it, either in scripture or reason.

Wherefore we must reckon that time indeterminately which a man spends in this world after he has sincerely repented, be it long, or be it short, for *an holy life*; and consequently I see not why, in those few days, hours, nay minutes that a sincere death-bed *penitent lives*, he may not be as truly said to *live holily*, as he that dates his holy living from twenty years continuance; and why the widow's two mites were not as true, tho' not as great an offering, as his that consisted perhaps of an hundred, or two hundred shekels.

2dly, To the second argument: That the death-bed penitent can only resolve upon leading an holy life; and that if the actual leading of such a life be necessary, then barely to resolve it cannot be sufficient; as, on the contrary, if to effect it be not necessary, then neither can it be necessary to resolve it.

To this I answer, by an absolute denial of that assertion, *That the death-bed penitent can only resolve upon living an holy life*. And to make out the reason of this denial, I shall here first lay down what is properly an holy life. In short, *it is the doing of all those actions that a man is obliged to do in the condition in which he is*; to which I add, that a man is obliged to do no more than he is capable of doing in such a condition,

Now a person upon his death-bed is only capable of doing such duties as are wholly transacted in the mind, and in the will; as loving of God, hating of sin, sorrowing for it, forgiving enemies, and the like; and these he is not only able to resolve, but also to perform.

But to go to church, to fast and pray, kneeling, with other such actions of duty, these are naturally not within his power in that state of weakness, and therefore he is not obliged to them. Yet, however, though he cannot perform these, he must not therefore be said *not to live holily*; forasmuch as he does perform other holy duties, which his condition is capable of doing, and in the doing of which an holy life equally consists.

I answer therefore to the second part of the argument, *that an holy life* is both necessary to be resolved on, and also to be performed, but both still in the same manner.

That is, a penitent, upon his repentance, is to resolve to *live holily for that whole course of time that he is to spend in the world*, and this resolution he is faithfully to perform. But he is not to resolve upon living an holy life, for such, or such a determinate number of years; inasmuch as it is not in his power to dispose of the time of his life so long.

But both resolution and performance as to this particular, is to respect a man's *whole life for the future*; whether that life fall out to be

be long or short. And if it chance, by God's providence, to last but one hour, yet still it is his whole life from that time, as much as if it were spun out to many years.

From which it follows, that a death-bed penitent may both resolve and perform as much as is required to complete the nature of an effectual repentance.

Having thus answered the arguments brought to disprove the efficacy of a death-bed repentance, it will not be amiss to consider what kind of persons they are that are the authors of such a grim assertion.

Are they of such an unstained unblameable life? such an angelical piety and perfection? Certainly it were but reason to expect that those that throw such great stones, that give such remorseless stabs to poor dying sinners, should be able to enter heaven themselves, tho' it were through the eye of a needle; and should be of such a sublime sanctity as to supererogate at the least, and not to need mercy themselves, who so severely deny it to others.

But I am afraid that, upon enquiry, it will appear, that they are nothing less. I should not willingly libel, or defame any, especially from the pulpit; but, from the best information I can give myself, either by reading, observation, or report, those that make the way to heaven so narrow, walk in the broad themselves; take a scope and liberty in their lives,

and content themselves to be only strict in their doctrine, denying to others a possibility to repent effectually on their death-bed, while they live in that manner themselves; that it seems to be for their interest to hold even a possibility of repenting after death.

In short, they are usually such as prescribe rules and directions for other men to follow; such as, after the practices of uncleanness, tell others, that they must become vestals; such as are famous for covetousness, and for preaching against it.

These are those inexorable spiritual *Cato's*, those parsimonious dispensers of mercy; perhaps out of a mistaken fear, upon the knowledge of their own wickedness, lest there should not be mercy enough for themselves.

Thus the late casuists of the church of *Rome*, what great things do they speak of man's power to merit, to fulfil, and overdo the law, to an higher uncommanded strain of perfection; and yet what puddles, what sinks of impurity are their books of casuistical divinity; what horrid loose maxims have they, that not only undermine christianity, but even extinguish and cut the bands of all morality! Which licentious doctrines have already kindled such a flame in that church as, for aught I know, may burn to its confusion.

But to return to our subject: We shall still find, that such as are most merciless to dying sinners, in stopping up the passages of repentance

ance and salvation against them, do yet relax this rigour, and walk by another rule themselves; unless, perhaps it may more properly be said, that they walk by no rule at all.

And experience has shewn, that those spiritual guides who are the most austere in their own lives, the greatest and most rigid exactors of duty from themselves, and of the most improved acquaintance and converse with God; yet when such come to deal with dying sinners, they handle their wounds more gently, treat them with more relents and compassion, open the treasures of pardoning mercy to them more freely, and are glad to see any glimmerings of sincerity and contrition, that may warrant them to send the repenting sinner out of the world with a full and a free absolution.

And the reason of this is, because such, by a continual strict living up to the precepts of Christ, come at length to partake of the spirit and temper of Christ; who of all men that ever lived, or shall live in the world, was the freest even from the least stain of sin, and yet was the most boundless and enlarged in his compassion to sinners.

And certainly, should he now live and converse with us, he that raised sinners from their graves, would not now condemn them upon their death-beds.

And thus, I think, that I have not only answered, but also cleared off all objections

against this doctrine, so that it may henceforward pass for a gospel truth; which, that I may yet further confirm, I shall produce positive arguments to prove and assert it.

1st, The first shall be taken from this consideration; that such a repentance commenced at the last hour of a man's life, has *de facto* proved effectual to salvation; and therefore there is no repugnancy in the nature of the thing itself, but that it may do so again. The consequence is clear; for that which is impossible in itself, can never be verified so much as in any one single instance; and that if it were impossible for any repentance beginning at the latter end of a man's life, that is, just before his death, to prove saving, no one man whatsoever so repenting could be saved.

But the falsity of this evidently appears from that eminent and known instance of the thief upon the cross; whose repentance began no sooner than his crucifixion, and yet it ended with the rewards of paradise. And who knows, but that God intended this signal instance to remain as a perpetual remedy against despair, to sinners repenting in any part of their lives? And there are some doctrines, that God does not think fit to set down and express in open terms, lest the corruption of our nature might abuse them to presumption; but rather to hint them to us in an example, and to represent them in the person of another: leaving us, by rational dis-

discourse, to apply the same to ourselves when we are in the like condition.

As for instance: Should God have said in express terms, that tho' a man murders his neighbour, and commits adultery with his wife, yet, if he repents, such sins should not hinder his salvation: such a declaration as this, given antecedently to these villainous actions, would have been apt to have encouraged the wicked hearts of men much more boldly to have ventured upon the commission of them.

But now, should any one chance to be plunged into such enormous sins as these, that he might not here, subsequently to the act, which cannot be recalled, utterly cast off all thoughts of mercy, and consequently of returning to God, for the obtaining of mercy, God has discovered so much compassion, in the pardon of *David* guilty of the same sins, upon his sincere repentance, as to keep such an one from despair, and to warrant him his pardon, if, upon the same sins, he acts the same repentance.

The same very possibly might be the design of the spirit here, not to make any such declaration of pardon openly and expressly to death-bed penitents, lest by accident it might open a door of licence to sin; but rather to preach it more tacitly to our reasons, in the example of the thief upon the cross; that in case a sinner be overtook, and brought upon

his death-bed, he might not yet despair, seeing one before him obtaining pardon in *the same condition*.

2dly, The second argument is taken from the truth and certainty of that saying, owned and attested by God himself, in 2 Cor. viii. 12. *That if there be first a willing mind it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that a man hath not.* That is, it is accepted instead of the deed, when the deed, through some outward impediment, not within the power of man to remove or remedy, becomes impracticable.

Now, when a penitent upon his death-bed has wrought his repentance to the highest resolutions, and most sincere purposes of future obedience, if God immediately put a period to his life, is it any fault of his if he is took off from so full an execution of those purposes as he intended?

Certainly God, who can pierce into his soul, and view the sincerity of those resolutions, seeing that, in case he should live many years, they would be all performed, and actually drawn forth into so many years obedience, he cannot but rate those intentions according to the utmost effect and issue that they would have had under such opportunities.

And as for the time, so also for the quality of duty: where God has visited a man with such bodily weakness, that he cannot move or stir from his bed, do we not think that God accepts

accepts his desire to attend the church, to kneel in prayer, with other acts of devotion to which the body must concur, as truly and really, as if he had strength of body actually to perform all these?

Truly, if we deny that he does, we have strange thoughts of the equity and goodness of his nature; and degrade his mercy to a pitch below the mercies of an earthly father, and the dispensations of a prudent governor.

Indeed, when God is said in such a case to accept of the will, and to dispense with the deed, it is only a further explication of that known, unalterable rule of justice, that God cannot command or require the performance of a thing impossible.

But should he exact the deed, when the weakness of a man's condition utterly disables him to perform it; should he command a bed-ridden person to stand or kneel, or require ten years practice of holiness from him that is to live but an hour, what could this be but to rank his commands amongst those unreasonable, tyrannical injunctions that *will and require impossibilities*?

3dly, The third argument why a death-bed repentance may prove effectual, is, because repentance saves not, as it is a work, or such a number of works; but as it is the effect of a renewed nature, and a sanctified heart, from which it flows. But now, the renovation of our nature being the sole immediate work of
God's

God's spirit, it may be wrought (if it so please him) in the last moment of our lives, as well as in twenty years: for, being a new creation, and the production of a quality in the soul, that was not there before, there is nothing hinders, but that by an infinite power it may be transacted in an instant.

Upon which I argue thus: If God can sanctify and renew a man's nature in the last instant of his life, then a person, thus sanctified, is either in a state of salvation, or he is not: if not, then a man, truly sanctified, may be in a damnable condition; which is false and absurd: but if he is, then, inasmuch as a death-bed penitent may be thus sanctified and renewed, he may be also in a state of salvation, which is inseparably annexed to a true sanctification.

But now, on the other hand, if we say that a man cannot be a true penitent, and in a state of salvation, unless he has spent such a considerable number of years or months in the continual exercise of holy duties; what is this, but to ascribe his salvation to such a measure of works? *This is evident*: for a death-bed penitent may have all other qualifications; as a sanctified heart, a sincere resolution, and a direction of it to the glory of God; so that there is nothing wanting but such a number of holy actions. Now if, notwithstanding the former qualities, salvation must be yet denied to such a penitent, is it
not

not most clear, that salvation is stated upon the *opus operatum* of such a parcel of holy performances? So that it is not the sincerity, but the multitude; not the kind, but the number of our actions, that must save us. Which assertion if we admit, and improve into its due consequences, I cannot see but that it *must* needs bring us back to our beads.

4thly, A fourth argument is this: If to repent sincerely, be a thing, at the last moment of our lives, impossible to be done, then, for that instant, impenitence is not a sin. For it cannot be a sin, not to do that, which in its nature cannot be done. The reason is, because where there is no obligation, there can be no sin, inasmuch as sin is either the transgression or omission of something that we stand obliged to do: but I have shewn before, that no man can be obliged to impossibilities. It follows therefore from hence, that not to repent upon one's death-bed, is no sin, because, according to the opinion hitherto maintained, to repent there is impossible. Which argument is of so much quickness and force, that were there no other, this alone were enough, both to establish *ours*, and to overthrow the contrary assertion.

5thly, The fifth argument that I shall produce is this: That to deny that a death-bed repentance can be effectual to salvation, is a clear restraint and limitation of the compass and prerogative of God's mercy.

For,

For, since it is a thing, that neither involves any contradiction in itself, nor yet to any one of God's attributes, it is both an impudent and an insolent thing, for any man to deny the possibility of it. For shall we prescribe to Omnipotence, or set bounds to an infinite Mercy, and say, that this and this it can do; but this it cannot? What, if God, willing to shew the riches of his mercy, calls and accepts of some at the very last hour of the day, and rewards them equally with those that came in at the first; have we any thing to reply against such a proceeding, or to carp at his justice, or to murmur at our brother's felicity? God expressly says, that his thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor his mercies as our mercies. And indeed, sad and lamentable were the condition of most sinners, if they were. The number of those that should be saved would be much less, and the volume of the book of life contracted to a very small epitome.

I should think it therefore much more agreeable to a pious sobriety, to acquiesce in the method of God's dealing; and, according to rule of the civil law, rather to amplify, than to limit acts of favour.

If God brings a sinner to himself at the last, and so makes his death-bed a portal and entrance to heaven; if he accepts of the purposes, and crowns the short endeavours of a late repentance with life and glory; I, for my part, have

have nothing to do here, but to congratulate the person that obtains, and to adore the *mercy* that gives it.

6thly, The sixth and last argument for the confirmation of the same truth is this: That if a death-bed repentance cannot possibly be effectual to salvation, then a sinner upon his death-bed, having not repented before, may lawfully, and without sin, despair. The reason is clear; for *where the proper object of hope ceases*, which is possibility of pardon, there despair must lawfully succeed: For despair is then only a sin when there is ground of hope, of which here there is none. In short, despair cannot be sinful where it is rational; but it is most rational to despair of salvation, when the only means of attaining it, which is repentance, becomes impossible.

But now, I desire any one to shew me any thing in the gospel that admits of despair in the time of this life; nay, that does not prescribe and condemn it as utterly sinful: it is proper only to the state of the damned, whose condition God has declared to be remediless. But God has not signified, that a sinner, in any part of his life whatsoever, is out of all possibility of mercy and salvation. *Indeed*, as a man dies, so he continues for ever; but while he lives, his condition is alterable.

And therefore that assertion that must engage a man both certainly and lawfully to despair,

despair, while he is on this side death, is surely a branch of a new, unheard-of gospel and divinity.

And thus I have endeavoured to demonstrate, that it is not impossible for a man effectually to repent upon his death-bed. Which doctrine, if it be true, truth, as such, cannot be hurtful, however by accident and abuse it may.

But I shall now proceed, from these arguments, to such considerations, as will be more strong to keep off the encroachments of presumption, than these can be to invite them. And so, I am come to the second general head, proposed for the management of this subject, viz. That supposing that a death-bed repentance may, in the issue, prove effectual, yet for any one to design and build upon it before-hand, is highly dangerous, and therefore absolutely irrational.

The truth of which will be made to appear from these considerations.

1st, The first shall be taken from the exceeding unfitness of a man at this time, above all others, to exercise this duty. Repentance is a work that will take up the whole soul; that will distend every faculty, and fill every part and power of it, even when it is in its most vigorous, fresh, and active condition.

It is transacted by the sublimest and most refined operation of the soul, which is reflexion. The soul must retreat into itself,
view

view its accounts, and summon the records of memory, to give in a faithful relation of all a man's past sins, of all the passages and remarks of his former life. *And*, having done this, the mind must dwell upon a sad and severe consideration of the nature, degrees, and aggravating circumstances of each sin, 'till thought improves into affection, and opens the penitential sluices, and fills the heart with sorrow, mourning, and weeping for sin; which sorrow for sin rising higher and higher, 'till at length it ends in detestation of it, and resolutions against it, it becomes the first degree of a true repentance.

But is a man fit to encounter and run thro' all these difficulties, amidst those many impediments, both natural and civil, that clog and hang about him in his death-bed condition?

And first, for natural hindrances: His memory will be weak and treacherous; his judgment infirm, and his apprehension slow and dark. And then, perhaps, all these disabilities may be increased by the accession of bodily distempers: either lethargies may dispirit and benumb him, or some acute painful disease divert and enrage him. *So that* the whole man is in a tumult and disorder: within is weakness, without is pain: his intellectuals forsake him; his fever scorches him; life is troublesome, and yet death terrible. In short, the man is very unfit to use his reason, to remember,

member, or contemplate ; and, being so, how can he be fit to repent ? which is a work that includes in it all these operations.

But we will suppose the death-bed penitent, by the mercy of Providence, pretty well freed from these natural impediments, and that he has a good proportion of memory, a good reserve of judgment, with a readiness to apprehend and discern, and to exercise the several functions of a rational nature. *Yet then* there are civil obstructions, worldly encumbrances, settling the estate, providing for friends, satisfying the craving importunities of relations. And what can a poor, dying man do, when such a swarm of troublesome thoughts are buzzing about him ? How can he recollect and compose himself to a meditation of his past actions, when he is busied in settling things for the future ?

Repentance is too great a thing to be weilded in such an hurry. No sooner, perhaps, is a man setting himself to clear old scores between God and his soul, but his worldly creditors come bauling upon him for another kind of satisfaction. No sooner does he set himself to mourn and weep for his sins, but he is interrupted with the tears of those that stand weeping for him,

This is his case : and now, can any rational person in the world judge that a death-bed is the proper scene of repentance ? That a dying person, wracked with pain, choaked with phlegm,

phlegm, immersed, and even buried in incumbrances, before he is dead, can be fit to manage the spiritual-searching severities of this duty?

The apostle observes well, in *2 Tim. ii. 4.* *That no man that warreth, entangled himself with the affairs of this life.* And, indeed, repentance is a kind of spiritual warfare; but certainly none so unfit for a war as a dying person.

There are some duties, whose performance so properly belongs to some certain time, that they can neither with ease nor order be performed out of it. Repentance is the work of life, and the business of health. And truly, that man has mis-timed his work, and misplaced his occasions, who, when he comes upon his death-bed, has any thing else to do, than the proper *business of that place, which is to die.*

2dly, The other reason is taken from this consideration, that there can be no arguments, from which either the dying person himself, or others by him, can certainly conclude that his repentance is sound and effectual. I speak of ordinary means of knowledge; for it is confessed, that God, by an extraordinary manner, may reveal it to a man; and, as he gave him the grace of true repentance, so he may give him an assurance and certain knowledge of the truth of that repentance.

But by the ordinary, usual methods of discourse, the dying penitent cannot infallibly know it: the reason is, because he has no infallible medium, to introduce him to such a knowledge.

The mediums, by which he must collect it, can be no other than these three: *1st*, The heartiness of his present resolutions, in relation to a future amendment: or, *2^{dly}*, The great expressions of sorrow that he makes for his past sins: or, *3^{dly}*, His solicitous concernment for his estate in the next world.

But all these, according to the cognizance that a death-bed penitent can take of them, are very fallible.

For the first, his resolutions, tho' God, who quenches not the smoking flax, will by no means reject these, if sincere; but will own the work of his grace, tho' but kindled in the first true intention, as much as if it flamed out in a constant and glorious practice: yet, in regard the opportunities of performing those death-bed resolutions are in a great measure cut off; the death-bed penitent cannot be assured that his resolutions are true. For a man may think, that he heartily resolves against a sin, when indeed he does not: his own heart deceiving him. As in a man's lifetime, he often finds, by experience, that when he has took up firm purposes and resolves against a sinful course, so that, as he thinks, he shall never relapse into it again; yet, not-
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withstanding, upon the next temptation, all such resolutions disband and vanish, and the proposal is complied with; which clearly shews that these purposes and resolutions were indeed false and deceitful.

And now, how does the death-bed penitent know, but the resolutions he makes there, may be as weak and unsincere, as those that heretofore he made, and broke in the time of his health! Possibly they may be sincere; but he cannot certainly know it, but God alone, who only can foresee, whether, in case his life should be prolonged, those resolves would be made actuate in performance.

And then, for the other two things, his vehement expressions of sorrow, and his concernment about his salvation, are of as uncertain information as the other. For a man may mourn and weep for those sins, which he yet afterwards returns to, continues in, and, perhaps, dies under; which shews that tears and sighs, and complaints, and all other expressions of sorrow whatsoever, are utterly fallacious. But in the state a man now is, all these may very well be presumed to issue from the fear and terror of an approaching damnation. And fear is a kind of constraint and violence upon the will; so that all schoolmen unanimously hold, that actions proceeding from fear, are of a mix'd nature, and not perfectly voluntary.

Now all fear is from a principle of self-love; and therefore all religious actions, commenced upon this motive, are spurious, and rejected by God.

This supposed; I affirm, that it is more than ten to one, but that all the pomp of a death-bed repentance, in its highest and most angelical resolutions, in its most sorrowful, mournful and affectionate discoveries, moves wholly upon this false spring of fear, suggested upon the dismal *apparition* of the *nearness* of death, and the frightful thoughts of a miserable eternity.

It is highly probable that there is scarce one of an hundred in this condition, but goes off with the forced sorrows of fear, instead of repentance; and so dies rather terrified, than sanctified.

And would not any rational man here rather fear and suspect that his lot may fall amongst the hundred, than promise himself, that he shall be that one exempted person? Certainly it is ill venturing the salvation of an immortal soul upon such huge unlikelihoods, such vast disparities.

But, to conclude, and wrap up all that I have said, for and against a death-bed repentance: I aver, that it is not at all in a man's power, but only in God's; and that God, being offended with a wicked life, is more likely to deny than to give it, at the hour of death: that a man has all the indispositions
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of body and mind imaginable, to unfit and disable him for it: that it is very seldom true, always suspicious; and that when true, yet it is not discernable by any certain, infallible sign to be so: in short, that it is most difficult, doubtful, dangerous, and very improbable.

In fine, I have this alone to say for it, (and, to a considering person, I need say no more against it,) that it is only not impossible.

To Almighty God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N . VIII.

R O M. i. 3, 4.

3. Περὶ τοῦ ὡς αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ κατὰ σαρκά.

4. Τοῦ ὀριζήτος ὡς Θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν) Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

*Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who was made of the seed of David, ac-
cording to the flesh.*

*And declared to be the Son of God with
power, according to the spirit of holiness,
by the resurrection from the dead.*

IN these Words we have an adequate and entire description of the person of Christ. For in the third verse his human nature, and in the fourth his divine, is fully and exactly represented to us.

I delight not (I must confess) to insist much upon philological, or philosophical discourses in dispensing the word; but where the construction of the text lies so, that we cannot otherwise reach the full sense of it, but by making

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ing our way through doubts and ambiguities, we must have recourse to such expedients.

The present exercise, therefore, shall consist of these two parts.

I. An *explication of the words.*

II. An *accommodation of them to the present occasion.*

I. For the first of these we must know, that the scheme of the *Greek* carries a very different face from our translation, which difference renders the sense of the words very disputable.

The explication of which I shall comprise in the resolution of these four enquiries.

1st, Whether the translation rightly renders it, that Christ was *declared to be the son of God*, since the original admits of a different signification.

2^{dly}, What is imported by this term, *with power.*

3^{dly}, What is intended by the following words, *according to the spirit of holiness.*

4^{thly}, and lastly, How those words (*by the resurrection from the dead*) are to be understood.

In all which (as the resolution will manifest the reason of the doubt) I shall be as brief as I can; for if I should give myself scope to pursue each particular through all the difficulties that might attend it, it would fill a

much larger discourse than the measure of the present exercise will allow. After which explication I shall shew, that *the resurrection of Christ* is the greatest and the principal argument to prove the divinity of his person.

1st, And first for the first of these: That which we render *declared* is in the Greek ἀποκρίνω, which may signify *decreed*, or *determined*; and accordingly the vulgar *Latin* reads it *prædestinatus*, and some other *destinatus est*. But with what propriety, or indeed with what tolerable sense, Christ could be said to be *decreed* to be the son of God, which *he was from eternity*; and especially to be *decreed to be so by the resurrection from the dead*, a thing that had happened very lately, is hard to understand, and much harder to make out. That which is the proper object of decree or *destination* is something future; but that which was eternal cannot be imagined in any period of time to be future.

Those, indeed, who deny the eternal Godhead of Christ, and date his deity *entirely*, and his sonship *principally*, from his *resurrection*, are great friends to this exposition of the word; and well may they be so, for it serves their turn to very great purposes: for if Christ was constituted eminently the son of God at and by his resurrection, it might very properly be said of him, that he was *decreed* so to be antecedently to his resurrection; but how this can

can consist with the supposition of his eternal Godhead, I must profess, I cannot apprehend.

Aquinas, indeed, retains this interpretation of the word by *prædestinatus est*; but it was the gross ignorance of the *Greek* tongue, and all critical learning in those days, that betrayed so great a judgment to the inconvenience of holding that, of which to give a rational account he took so much pains, and to so little purpose.

Erasmus therefore observes, (whose authority in this sort of learning is inferior to none) that there is another proper signification of the word *ῥησις*, besides *to decree or determine*, and that is, *to declare, shew forth, or manifest*; hence in grammar the indicative mood is called *ῥησις*; and in logick the definition of a thing, which is the declaration of its nature, is called *ῥησις*, or *ῥησις*; all which confirm this interpretation.

And for the agreeableness of it to this place, besides the utter disagreeableness of any other signification; that is proved from hence, as that it carries a most fit and emphatical opposition to the words of the former verse, where the apostle expresses Christ's human nature by *γενόμενος*, *he was made of the seed of David*, which word imports the *constitution* of something that did not exist before: but here in this verse, *expressing* his divine nature, since he had from eternity been the son of God, it is not said of him

him that he was *made*, but only *declared* or *manifested* to be so.

Besides, the apostle here speaks of things past and already done; which being so, with what propriety could he insist upon a thing only as *decreed* and purposed, after it had actually come *to pass*? especially since it was this only which here made for his purpose. His design was to prove Christ the son of God, by an argument taken from a thing known and notable, which was his resurrection; and would any rational disputer omit this, that he was actually risen, and argue only from this, that it *was decreed* that he should *rise from the dead*? According to the natural way of speaking, men never use to say that such a thing is *decreed*, or purposed, after once *that decree*, or purpose, has passed *into execution*. And so much for explication of the *first term*.

2dly, The second enquiry is, what is imported by this term *with power*; the *Greek* is *ἐν δυνάμει*, in power, so that by some it is rendered *in virtue*; but it being not unusual for the particle *ἐν* to be put for *ὡς*, it is most properly rendered in our translation *with power*; which, tho' some understand of the power of Christ, as it exerted itself in the miracles which he did; yet here it signifies rather the glorious power of his divine nature, *by which he overcame death*, and properly opposed to the *weakness* of his human nature, by which he *suffered*

ferred it. Correspondent to which is that place in 2 Cor. xiii. 4. *He was crucified by weakness, but he liveth by the power of God.* That is, the weakness of his humanity made him capable of the death of the cross; but the power of his divinity triumphed over that death, and raised him to an eternal life.

3dly, The third thing to be enquired into is, what is the intent of the following words, [*according to the spirit of holiness.*] The expression is an *Hebraism*, and signifies as much as the *Holy Spirit*; but what is the meaning of that here, is the doubt to be resolved.

Some understand it only as a farther explication of the precedent word *ἐν δυνάμει*, taking both that and this for the miraculous works done by the spirit of God to confirm the gospel: For still we shall find that the miracles of Christ and his apostles were ascribed to *the spirit of God*; which exposition cannot stand, for these reasons:

1st, Because it ought then to have been joined with the precedent words by conjunction, *καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ κατὰ πνεῦμα*.

2dly, Because in right construction it should have been *πνευματ*, or *ἐκ πνεύματος*, *by the spirit*, noting the efficient cause; not *according to the spirit*, as it is here; for *κατὰ πνεῦμα* can never be brought to have an equivalent signification to *ἐκ πνεύματος*.

In the next place, therefore, if we observe the connection between this and the former verse,

verse, we shall find that there is a certain antithesis between them; and that as *κατὰ σάρκα* signifies the human nature of Christ, so *κατὰ πνεῦμα* may most appositely signify the divine; for it is not unusual in scripture for the divine nature to be rendered by the word *spirit*; *John* iv. 24. *God is a spirit*; and, *1 Tim.* iii. 16. it is said, in respect of Christ, *That God was manifested in the flesh, but justified in the spirit*; that is, he was proved to have a divine nature, as well as an human. And now here, because the apostle had expressed the humanity of Christ, not by *κατ' ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν*, or *κατ' ἀνθρώπον*, but *κατὰ σάρκα*, namely, the better to set forth the frailty and gross substance of the human nature; by way of opposition, he renders his divinity by *κατὰ πνεῦμα*, a word properly corresponding to *κατὰ σάρκα*, and withal importing the vigorous and refined substance of this nature. And whereas he annexes this qualification of *holiness*, and calls it the *spirit of holiness*, it is because he considers not the divine nature of Christ, absolutely in itself, but according to the relation it had to, and the great effect that it exercised upon his other nature. For it was his divinity which sanctified, consecrated, and hypostatically deified his humanity; and in that respect it is here treated of by the apostle.

4thly, I come now to the explication of that fourth and last expression, [*by the resurrection from the dead*,] which is exceeding different

ferent from the original, according to the first and literal appearance of the sentence. For the words [*Jesus Christ our Lord,*] which in the translation are placed in the beginning of the third verse, in the *Greek* are the last words of the fourth; which has occasioned great diversity in the construction. The words in the original are these, ἐκ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. So that what we render [*by the resurrection from the dead*] is word for word to be rendered, *by the resurrection of the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Whereupon some interpret it not of Christ's personal resurrection; which, they say, ought to have been ἐκ νεκρῶν, not simply νεκρῶν; but either of the resurrection of those, who in *Matthew* are said to have rose from their graves, at the time of Christ's crucifixion, or of the general resurrection of all the saints; who are therefore called the *dead* of Jesus Christ, to discriminate them from the wicked and the reprobates, who, tho' they shall rise again, yet bear not this relation to Christ.

Accordingly they take the word ἀνάστασις, actively for the action of Christ, by his power raising them from the dead: forasmuch as otherwise their being raised from the dead, would not have had so immediate a force to prove Christ to be the son of God.

But that the words are not so to be rendered, nor consequently to be understood of the resurrection of any but of Christ himself, is clear

clear, upon the strength of this reason. That (as I have partly observed already) the apostle's design here is to demonstrate to the *Romans* the divinity of Christ, by some signal passage already done, and so familiarly known by them. But the general resurrection was as yet future, and the resurrection of those few, it is probable, was not so famed a thing, as to have been commonly known amongst them: especially since there is mention of it only in *St. Matthew*, but in none else, either of the apostles or evangelists; who, being so diligent in representing all those arguments that seemed to prove the divinity of Christ, had they apprehended this to have been so clear and immediate an argument for the proof of it, certainly would not have thus passed it over in silence.

I conclude therefore that it is to be understood of the personal resurrection of Christ from the dead. So that the only thing that remains for us, is to solve and make out the construction: for which, tho' several ways may be assigned, yet the most rational is to refer the words *ὁς Χρὶς τὸ πρῶτον ἠμῶν*, by apposition to the precedent words in the former verse, *ὡς πρὶν τὸ ὅτι ὁρίσθη*; not making it to be governed of *ὡς πρῶτον*; so that in the *Latin* translation *Jesus Christ* is not to be rendered by the *genitive*, but by the *ablative* case; it being repeated after the intervening words, by an hyperbator; a figure usual in the writings of
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this apostle; whose expression must be acknowledged to be none of the *easiest*, or the *clearest*.

Neither is it material, that the particle *ἐκ* is not prefixed to *νέκρω*, to make it *from the dead*; since it is usual amongst the *Greeks*, to omit *præpositions*, such as *ἐν*, *ἐκ*, and *ἀπό*; as also amongst the *Latins*, with whom *surrexit terrâ*, is all one with *surrexit à terrâ*. But above all this, the *præposition* here may be so much the better omitted, since the very word *Ἀνάστασις* carries in it the force of this *præposition*: forasmuch as it denotes a motion or recess from a certain *place*, or *state*.

And thus I have given an *explication* of the *words*, the first thing proposed for the management of this subject; which explication has been, I confess, something large, but, I hope, to those who understand these matters, is not altogether *unuseful*.

II. I come now to the second general head; which is, the *accommodation* of the *words* to the *present occasion*; and that shall be in shewing, that *Christ's resurrection is the greatest and the principal argument to prove him the son of God*. Now both the foundation and sum of the gospel lies within the compass of this proposition, that *Jesus of Nazareth is the son of God*. From which one aphorism spring all the other branches of christianity. For that which properly discriminates the christian religion from the natural,

tural, or judaical, is the holding of *Christ's deity*, and his satisfaction naturally consequent upon it: to both which together are reduceable all the parts of the gospel, as appendages to, or conclusions naturally flowing from them.

But it is not here to be denied, that Christ is capable of being called *the son of God*, in several respects; as that, according to his human nature, he had no natural father, but was produced in the womb of his mother by the immediate power of God; as also for his resemblance to God, upon the accounts of his transcendent holiness: it being proper to call him the son of God, who does the works of God; (as Christ called the *Jews* the sons of the devil, for doing the works of the devil, *John* iii. 44.) *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*: all great likeness in the scripture dialect founding the denomination of sonship. Christ might be also called the Son of God, from his having the government of all things put into his hands upon his ascension. All this must be granted: yet, here we are to consider only the principal and grand cause of his being called so; which is from the eternal generation and emanation of his person, from the person of the Father; that is, we are to consider him to be the Son of God, upon such an account, as may also infer and prove him to be God himself.

Now

Now this super-eminent way of sonship being the foundation of his deity, as that is the foundation of our religion, ought, in reason, to be evinced by some great and evidently conclusive argument; and such an one we affirm to have been his resurrection.

But you will here naturally reply; how can this be a proper proof of that? how can his resurrection, which supposes him to have been dead, prove him to be such an one, as existed from all eternity, and so could not die? Is the grave a medium to demonstrate a person incorruptible? or death to enforce that he is immortal? I answer, That this argumentation is so far very right; and that the resurrection, considered only in a bare relation to the person rising from the dead, proves him only to be a wonderful man; but is so far from proving him the eternal son of God, that it rather proves the contrary. But then, if we consider it with relation to the doctrine of that person, affirming himself to be thus the son of God; and as the seal set to the truth of that doctrine, by an omnipotent hand, and an unfailing veracity: why, thus it is an infallible argument to prove the real being of all those things that were asserted by that person. Christ's resurrection therefore proved him to be the eternal son of God, consequentially; that is, as it was an irrefragable confirmation of the truth of that doctrine which had declared him to be so.

It is much disputed, whether Christ's resurrection is to be referred to his own power, raising himself from the dead, or only to the power of the father. Those who deny his eternal divinity, allow only this latter, stiffly opposing the former. To give countenance to this their opposition, they seem to make challenge to any one to produce but one place of scripture, where Christ is said to *have raised himself from the dead, and they will yield the cause.* To which I answer; Tho' this is nowhere affirmed in these very terms, representing it in *præterito*, as done; yet, if Christ spoke the same thing in words importing the future, the result is undoubtedly the same. And for this, I desire to know what they will answer to that place, *John ii. 19.* where Christ, speaking of his body, says, *Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up?* Does not Christ personally appropriate the action to himself, and to his own power? wherefore that exception is a vapour and a cavil, unbecoming a rational opponent.

But I add, that as to the proof of the divinity of Christ's person, it is not material whether his resurrection be stated upon his own power, or the power of his father; for both equally prove the same thing, tho' in a different manner.

If Christ raised himself, it *directly* proves that he was God, and so had a divine nature, besides his human: for, if he raised
that,

that, being dead, it must needs follow, that he did it by virtue of a power inherent in another nature, which was some divine spirit.

But, on the other hand, if the father raised him, yet still it proves him to have been God; forasmuch as he always avouched himself to be so; and the father would not have exerted an infinite power to have confirmed a lye, or verified the words of an impostor.

Having thus shewn how Christ's resurrection could be a proper argument to prove his divinity, and eternal sonship, I come now, in the next place, to shew, that it is the greatest, and the principal of all others.

And for this we may observe, that the arguments for the proof of the truth of Christ's doctrine, of which the sum is, *that he himself is the son of God*, are generally reduceable to these three:

1st, The nature of the things taught by him.

2^{dly}, The fulfilling of prophecies in his person.

3^{dly}, The miracles and wonderful works which he did in the time of his life.

Now, to prove that his resurrection was an argument surpassing all these, I shall premise this one consideration; that whatsoever is brought as an argument to prove a thing demonstratively, ought to be in itself not only true, but evident and clear. Forasmuch, as to prove a thing is properly to make it evi-

dent, but nothing can make another thing evident which is not so itself; nay, more evident than the thing to be proved by it. This being premised, let us take a brief examination of each.

1st, And first for the nature of the things which he taught. If you take a view of those which relate to practice; as, that we are to take no thought for the morrow, to take up our cross daily, and to renounce all the enjoyments of those things which were made only to be enjoyed; not to resist evil, nor to defend ourselves, but being smote upon one cheek to turn the other; and when the oppressor has robbed me of my coat, to gratify him with my cloke also; which is, in effect, to relinquish the grand rights of nature, and the eternal principle of *self-preservation*, writ in the hearts of all men with the pen of an adamant: furthermore, that for every petty anger we are responsible to the degree of murder; and that for every idle word, we are liable to eternal damnation; that is, to a perpetuity of torments, not only unsupportable, but unconceivable; with several other such articles of the same nature.

Now, I say, what strange, unusual, and grating documents are these to the nature and universal apprehensions of man's reason? How does this, as it were, start and fly back at the direful appearance of these severities, as much fitter to terrify than to persuade, to confound
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than to couquer the affections; and, therefore, if these have any influence upon man's belief, (as undoubtedly they have a very great one) we may be sure that such aphorisms shall never find any credit for their own sake, nor can it be expected that they should.

But then again; if we cast our eye upon what things Christ taught relating to belief, as that the divine nature being most simply and indivisibly one, there are yet three persons in it, every one of which is truly and properly God, Also, that the same person should be God and man; and that person, in his human nature, should be born of a virgin; that he should die, and make satisfaction for the sins of the world; and that there should be a resurrection of all mankind with the same bodies, tho' consumed many thousand years since, and by infinite changes transformed into other things; and all this to a state of happiness or misery, of which there shall be no end.

Now how much stranger are these than the former? How do they look more like riddles than instructions? designed rather to astonish than to inform the man's understanding.

A great part of the world reject them all, as absolute paradoxes, and contrary to *reason*, and we ourselves confess them to be above *reason*; so that from our confession it will follow, that they are not to be believed for themselves,

I conclude therefore, that tho' these things are in themselves most true, yea, as true as the most evident proposition in the mathematics; yet, *because* they are not at all evident, they are utterly unable to give evidence to the truth of that doctrine which does assert them.

2dly, The second argument of the truth of Christ's doctrine, and consequently of his divinity, is from the fulfilling of prophecies in his person. An argument no question very solid, and really conclusive, but perhaps not so clear and demonstrative as to silence very great exceptions.

For the ways of interpreting prophecies are so various, as to be here attended with such allowances, and there again bound up with such limitations, such distinctions between the literal and mystical intention of them, and such great difficulty to prove when one is to be pitched upon, and when the other, that he who shall look into this matter will find, that this argument is not so absolutely full, nor so totally commands down the difficulty, as to render all additional arguments superfluous.

The modern *Jews* are so expert and versed in this particular, that there is not a text or prophecy throughout all the old testament, but they will readily give you such an interpretation of it as shall not at all relate to Jesus Christ. Nay, and there have not been wanting some such amongst the Christians; one I am sure there has been, who has endeavoured to shew, that all or most of those places in
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the old testament, which the christian church generally applies to Christ, have had an actual and literal completion in some other before him, and so belong to him only by accommodation; which to a *Jew* (should you dispute with him, would upon another beg the question) would signify as much as nothing.

Tho' when such persons have shewn all the tricks they can upon the scripture, for I must needs call it shewing tricks upon it rather than expounding it; I say, still there remain some portions of it which point to Christ, with such a pregnant and invincible clearness, such as the 22d *Psalms* and the 53d of *Isaiab*, that they cannot, without an apparent force, and a visible wresting them from their genuine sense, be applied to any else. And what good design to christian religion any one could have in giving them such an interpretation, as makes them, in the first and literal purport of them, not at all to relate to Christ, surpasses my understanding to give any tolerable account of.

3dly, The third argument is taken from the wonderful works that Christ did during his life time; all which were undoubtedly high proofs of the truth of the doctrine which they were brought to prove, and consequently of the divinity of Christ's person, and of his mission. They were the syllogisms of heaven, and the argumentations of Omnipotence.

Yet over these also Christ's resurrection had a vast preheminance, and that I prove upon the strength of these two considerations.

1st, That all the miracles Christ did, supposing that his resurrection had not followed, would not have had sufficient efficacy to have proved him to be the Messias. But his resurrection alone, taking it single and by itself, and without any relation to his precedent miracles, had been a full and undeniable proof of the truth of his doctrine, and the divinity of his person. The former part of the assertion is clear from that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 14. *If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain*; and in the 17th verse, *Ye are yet in your sins*. Now before Christ's death all his miracles were actually done, and yet, notwithstanding all these, the apostle lays this supposition, that in case then he had not rose from the dead the whole proof of the gospel had fallen to the ground, and been buried with him in the same grave.

And for the other part of the assertion, that Christ's resurrection alone, without respect to his miracles, had been a sufficient demonstration of the truth of his doctrine, that appears upon these two accounts.

1st, That the thing considered absolutely in itself, according to the greatness and wonder of it, did transcend and outweigh all the rest of his works put together,

2^{dly}, That it had a more intimate and near connection with his doctrine than any of the rest; and that not only by way of inference, as a sign proving it, but by way of
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real effect, as it enabled him to give being and substance to the things which he had said and promised. He had promised to send the gifts of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples to fit them to promulge the gospel; he had promised also to raise up those that believed in him to life eternal at the last day: which are two of the principal parts and pillars of the doctrine delivered by him. But for him to have done this not rising from the dead, but continuing under a state *of death*, had been utterly impossible.

2dly, The second consideration upon which I ground the preheminance of Christ's resurrection, above all the rest of his miracles, is the general opinion and judgment that the world had of both. For besides, that upon Christ's doing the most strange and signal of his miracles, you will find that they did not convince men so potently, but that while some believed, as many or more went away with the same unbelief of him that they brought; so we shall find moreover, that they were still resolving them into some other cause, short of a divine power; *as that he cast out devils by the prince of the devils, Matth. xii. 24.* And they generally looked upon him as a conjurer, and as one who had commerce with a more potent spirit or dæmon, by whose assistance he was too hard for the rest. But now observe, when they came to that great and difficult problem of his resurrection, they never attempted to assign

assign any causes of that besides the power of God, so as by that means to depress the miraculousness of it; but they absolutely deny the matter of fact, and set themselves to prove that there was no such thing.

And to this day the modern *Jews*, who hold Christ to have been an impostor, do yet for all that grant the history of his miracles; that he did most of those strange, stupendious works reported of him; but still they persist in a denial of his resurrection.

All which shews, that they tacitly confess, that should they grant this one thing, *that Christ was risen from the dead*, they could have no reason to except against his person or doctrine; but must needs acknowledge, that being owned in such an immediate, undeniable way, by the power of God himself, and that in the grand and crowning passage of his doctrine, all that he said was true, and consequently that he himself was the *Messias, and son of God*.

But they thought his other miracles carried no such cogent evidence in them, but that they had so much to except against their being convinced by them, as to warrant their unbelief.

Which exceptions, I conceive, may be reduced to these two heads.

1st, The great difficulty of discerning when an action is really a miracle; which difficulty lies in this: That since a miracle is properly
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such an action as exceeds the force and power of natural or second causes : to the discerning of it so to be, it is required, that a man knows the utmost extent and just measure of the power of those causes, how far it extends, and where it ends, before he can certainly pronounce that such an action or effect does exceed it ; and consequently that it is a miracle. But now, I defy the greatest and the most indefatigable searchers of nature to give me in such an account of the activity and force of all natural causes, as to state the just boundaries and portions of their power. I cannot easily believe that any one would be so impudent, as to pretend to such an achievement.

But, admit that some men, by the singular dexterity of their wit, and their profound experience, were able to do this ; yet how will vulgar minds, which have neither ability, nor opportunity to make these enquiries, be able to assure themselves, that such an action is above the force of nature, and therefore to be ascribed to a supernatural power ?

These men, not being able to look beyond the outward bulk and first appearance of an action, determine miracles, not from the principle that causes them, but from the wonder that they find caused by them, in themselves : which wonder arises from the unusualness of the thing, and their utter ignorance of the reason of it. As for instance, suppose

suppose a man should come amongst a rude, barbarous sort of people, and affirm to them strange things, as a message from God; and, to verify his words, should assure them, that he would make such a piece of iron come to him of its own accord, and cure any wound immediately, without any application made to it; and accordingly should do so; that those people, who know nothing of the force of the load-stone, or the sympathetick cure of wounds, would from hence conclude, that this man did those things by a divine power, and consequently that his message was of divine authority, I do *no more* doubt, than that I am now speaking.

2dly, But then, in the next place, supposing that an action is fully known to be a miracle, it is altogether as difficult, if not more, to know whether it proves the truth of the doctrine of that person that does it, or not. The reason is, because it is not certain, but that God may suffer miracles to be done by an impostor, for the trial of men, to see whether or no they will be drawn off from a received, established truth. That the *Jews* thought so, is certain; and they took up their persuasion from these five first verses of *Deuteronomy* the xiiith: *If there arise amongst you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods,*
which

which thou hast not known, and let us serve them ; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or dreamer of dreams ; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul. And it is added, in the fifth verse ; that, that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death.

Now, tho' I no ways question, but that the main principle that acted the *Jewish* council in the putting of Christ to death, was carnal policy, and resolution to maintain their own grandeur ; yet, I verily believe, that the more zealous and conscientious of them (of which sort there were, doubtless, some) commenced their proceedings against him, upon the force of this law : for we must know, that it was the judgment of the *Jews*, that to *worship other gods*, was all one with *worshipping the true God*, in any other way, besides, or opposite to, the *Mosaick* institution. But this was their *ἁμαρτία τοῦ σέως*, the first and chief error that betrayed them to all the rest.

Now, supposing this to have been the sense of this law ; forasmuch as they saw that Christ visibly designed an abolition of the *Mosaick* rites and œconomy hereupon, notwithstanding all the signs and wonders shewn by him, they thought they had sufficient warrant to look upon him as an impostor, and to deal with him accordingly.

But

But moreover, as the forementioned scripture seems to prove, that God may suffer true miracles to be done by him, who does not always avouch a true doctrine; so the same seems yet more clear from those miracles done by several: as *Vespasian* is said to have cured a blind man, by spitting on him, and striking him with his foot; and *Pyrrhus*, king of *Epirus*, was wont to cure persons distempered with the spleen, with a touch of his foot. And, at this day, the kings of *England* and of *France*, cure a certain disease with a touch of their hand and a piece of money: all which cures can no more be resolved into the mere power of those agents, visibly employed in that action, than the curing of the lame or the deaf can be naturally effected with a word. And yet surely we neither believe the kings of *England* or *France*, upon this account, to be persons assisted by God, in all that they do or say, by an infallible spirit. I conclude, therefore, that it is not so easy to be assured of the truth of any doctrine upon the credit of a miracle done by the person who does promulge it.

For, to represent you the sum of both exceptions in short; he who will assure himself of the truth of any doctrine, upon the account of any miracle done by the author of it, must first assure himself, that it is a miracle: to be sure of which, he must understand the utmost power of all natural causes: which,

which, I have shewn, is very hard, if not impossible to be compassed. And then, after that he knows it to be a miracle, before he can conclude, that it proves any doctrine to be true, he must know that it was done by God, with an intent to confirm that doctrine; and not for some other end, as to try whether men will suffer themselves, by such means, to be drawn from the truth : which, since it is not to be distinguished by any mark of difference inherent in the actions themselves, but by a knowledge of the mind of God in them, which knowledge also we cannot have, without an immediate inspection into his counsels; it follows, that a certainty in these matters is highly difficult, and not, without a very strong faith, attainable. Hence it is, that the most learned writers of the *Romish* church, when they come to speak of the proof of the truth of any doctrine by miracles, speak exceedingly contemptibly of them : but this, perhaps, is no wonder, if they thought all other miracles of the same nature with those that they do themselves.

But now, neither of those two forementioned exceptions take place against the resurrection.

1st, For first, tho' we cannot assign the determinate point where the power of nature ends, and so cannot possibly know every miracle; yet there are some actions that at first appearance so vastly transcend it, that there
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can be no suspicion that they proceed from any power but a divine. As for instance, I cannot exactly tell how far a man may walk in a day, but yet I can tell that it is impossible for him to walk a thousand miles, by reason of the apparent disproportion between the natural strength of man, and such a performance. Now, such a thing does reason judge the raising of a dead man to life again, in reference to the force of natural causes; which, in their utmost actings, were never observed to do any thing like it: and certainly that is not in their power to do, which from the beginning of the world was never exemplified, or actually done by them, *so* much as in one particular instance.

2dly, And for the second: Should God suffer a miracle to be done by an impostor, (which I, for my part, think he never does; but have hitherto disputed only upon a supposition of the *Jews*;) yet, I say, there was no necessity hence to gather, that God did it to confirm the words of that impostor: for God may do a miracle when and where he pleases. So that it follows, not that it must needs relate to the vouching of what the impostor says. But now, Christ had so often laid the stress of the whole truth of his gospel upon this, that he would rise from the dead; and declared to those who sought for a sign, that it was the only sign that should be given to that generation; that God could
not

not have raised Christ from the dead, but that this action must needs have related to his words, and to have confirmed what Christ had said and promised, and consequently have joined with him in the imposture.

In a word; if this does not satisfy, I affirm, that it is not in the power of man to invent, or of God to do any greater thing to persuade the world of the truth of a doctrine. It would even puzzle Omniscience, and nonplus Omnipotence itself, to find out a brighter argument to confound infidelity. And I dare avouch, that he who believes not upon Christ's resurrection from the dead, would scarce believe, tho' he rose from the dead himself. So that, if after this he continues an infidel, he does, in effect, give heaven the lie, and bids the Almighty convince him, if he can. He is miracle-proof, and beyond the reach of persuasion; and not like to be convinced, 'till it is too late for him to be converted.

But to sum up all: He who builds the grand concern of his eternal happiness upon his obedience to the gospel, as the sure way to it; and his obedience to the gospel upon a firm belief of the same; and, lastly, grounds the said belief upon a belief of Christ's resurrection, has hereby made his *calling and election as sure*, as things knit together by an absolute decree, and an unchangeable law, are incapable of being ever disjoined, or forced

afunder. And therefore, instead of those uncouth, ill-sounding words, used by *Luther*, upon another occasion, *Si decipior, Deus me decepit*, such an one may, with equal reverence and assurance, conclude, that while he believes the christian religion true, because the great Author and Promulger of it died, and rose again from the dead, according to the scriptures, it will be as impossible for him, so doing, to be deceived, as it is for the God of infinite truth and goodness to deceive him.

To which God, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N IX.

ECCLES. i. 18.

*In much wisdom there is much grief:
and he that increaseth knowledge,
increaseth sorrow.*

IT is a saying usual, and of great reason, that we are to believe the skilful in their own art and profession. And therefore, if we would understand the nature, properties, and effects of knowledge, none can be so fit to inform us, as he, who by the very verdict of Omniscience itself, was, of all men in the world, the most knowing.

Nothing, indeed, is more common than for every man almost to pass an universal censure upon all persons and things; but none can despise a thing, rationally, but he who knows it thoroughly. Otherwise, tho' a man should pass a right judgment upon a thing, yet he does it only by accident; and not by reason, but luck: and therefore, tho'

the thing spoke be truth and wisdom, yet the speaker of it utters it like a fool. None but a scholar can be a competent judge of knowledge ; and therefore all the encomiums and endless praises of it, that now fly about the world, must come, and be tried, and stand, or fall, according to the verdict of this rule.

First therefore, we shall find those that are loudest in their commendations, and highest in their admirations of learning, are, for the most part, such as were never bred to it themselves : hence it is, that such, of all others, are the most desirous to breed their sons scholars ; so that if we take a list of the most renowned philosophers in former ages, and the most eminent divines in the latter, we shall find that they were, for the most part, of mechanick, mean, and plebeian parentage.

Upon this score also there came to be so many free-schools and endowed places for learning ; because those are most apt to send their children to study, who, being poor and low, are not able to maintain them in it ; and therefore need the expence and benevolence of others, to bring their imprudent designs to maturity. Let this therefore be fixed upon, as one great reason that the praise of knowledge is so great in the world, viz. that much the major part of the world is ignorant. And ignorant men are indeed very fit to praise and admire, but very unfit to judge.

I am not insensible that many will here presently be apt to stop me with those elogies that the most learned bestow upon knowledge, still adorning it with such panegyricks, such high words, and expressions, as if rhetorick was invented for nothing else but to describe and set off her praise. — But, in answer to this, tho' I might note, that to be learned and to be wise are things very different; yet I shall produce another reason of these commendations, which, in all probability, is this; that learned men would not seem and be judged fools, for spending their time upon so empty a thing; and therefore, as those that have been deceived into a ridiculous sight, do yet commend it, that they may not be thought to have been deceived, but may bring others into the same cheat with themselves.

So here, should philosophers confess, that all the time they spent about *materia prima*, about *esse per se*, and *esse per accidens*, they were laboriously doing nothing; the world would be apt to hiss, and to explode them; and others would be so wise as, seeing the example, to forbear the imitation. But now, when a man finds himself to be really deceived, the only relief that remains to him, is to cover the report of it, and to get companions in the deception.

If what has been hitherto said, does not satisfy, I can only take sanctuary in this;

that the same was *Solomon's* judgment : and I desire to know, whether those philosophers, who so profusely commend learning, knew more than he, and saw that worth in knowledge which he did ? As for *Aristotle*, who for these many ages has carried the repute of philosophy from all the rest, he certainly was not wiser than *Solomon* ; for he is reported to have stolen most of his philosophy out of *Solomon's* writings, and to have suppressed them from the view of posterity.

I proceed therefore, and take up my assertion upon the warrant of his judgment, whom God has hitherto vouched *the wisest of men* ; and therefore see no reason to alter it; till I am convinced by a wiser.

But, before I make any further progress, I must premise this ; that both in what has, and what shall be said by me, I design not the patronage of ignorance, especially in things spiritual : for, in this respect, we know, and are assured by the spirit of God, that this is the condemnation of the world, that *men love darkness rather than light* ; and that *the blind* must needs fall *into the ditch* : and for any man to expect to be saved, or to be happy, without the knowledge of the revealed will of God, in things necessary to salvation, is as great an absurdity, as to expect to see without eyes : and therefore, in these matters, he that increases ignorance, increases the means of his damnation ; he increases the shadow of death,

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adds darkneſs to darkneſs, and paſſes by the darkneſs of ignorance, to the darkneſs of hell and damnation.

But, if any thing is indeed ſaid *againſt* knowledge, it is againſt that only, that is ſo much adored by the world, and falſely called philoſophy; and yet more ſignificantly ſurnamed by the apoſtle *vain philoſophy*; and that too, with no other intent than to daſh the over-weening pride of thoſe that have it, and to divert the admiration of thoſe that have it not, to ſome better and more deſerving object.

But as for thoſe parts of knowledge, that are either instrumental to our knowledge of the will of God, or conduce to the good and ſupport of ſociety, in the ſtate that mankind now is, I muſt not be thought therefore to ſpeak againſt them, if from the text I impartially ſhew thoſe infelicities, thoſe miſeries and ſorrows, that through our ſin and weakneſs they are attended with. It is the effect of ſin, that duty is accompanied with ſorrow: and that by ſuch an unfortunate neceſſity of grief, we cannot attain the joy and happineſs we deſign to ourſelves in the end, unleſs for a time we quit it in the uſe of the means.

Now, the deſign of this portion of ſcripture is to rectify the abſurd opinions of the world, concerning the great idol of mankind, knowledge; and to take down their exceſſive

estimation of it, by shewing that it is the cause, or at least the inseparable companion of sorrow. And, in prosecution of the words, I shall demonstrate it to be so in these three respects :

- I. In respect of the nature and properties of the thing itself.
- II. In respect of the laborious and troublesome acquisition of it.
- III. In respect of its effects and consequents.

I. First of all then, knowledge is the parent of sorrow from its very nature, as being the instrument and means by which the afflicting quality of the object is conveyed to the mind; for as nothing delights, so nothing troubles till it is known. The merchant is not troubled as soon as his ship is cast away, but as soon as he hears it is.

The affairs and objects that we converse with have most of them a fitness to afflict and disturb the mind, And as the colours lie dormant, and strike not the eye, till the light actuates them into a visibility, so those afflictive qualities never exert their sting, nor affect the mind, till knowledge displays them, and slides them into the apprehension,

Nil scire vita jocundissima est. It is the empty vessel that makes the merry sound, Which is evident from those whose intellectuals are ruined with phrensy or madness; who

so merry, so free from the lash of care? their understanding is gone, and so is their trouble.

It is the philosopher that is pensive, that looks downwards in the posture of the mourner. It is the open eye that weeps.

Aristotle affirms, that there was never a great scholar in the world, but had in his temper a dash and mixture of melancholy; and if melancholy be the temper of knowledge, we know that it is also the complexion of sorrow, the scene of mourning and affliction.

Solomon could not separate his wisdom from vexation of spirit. We are first taught our knowledge with the rod, and with the severities of discipline. We get it with some smart, but improve it with more.

The world is full of objects of sorrow, and knowledge enlarges our capacities to take them in. None but the wise man can know himself to be miserable.

I might now, from the nature of knowledge, pass to the properties of it, and shew its uncertainty, its poorness, and utter inability to contribute any thing to the solid enjoyments of life. But before I enter upon this, there may be a question started, Whether or no there be indeed any such thing as true knowledge in the world? for there want not reasons that seem to insinuate that there is none.

1st, As first: Because knowledge, if true, is upon that score certain and infallible; but the certainty of the knowledge cannot be greater than

than the certainty of the faculty, or medium, by which it is acquired: Now all knowledge is conveyed through sense, and sense is subject to fallacy, to err, and to be imposed upon. For how often does our eye tell us that the trees and the banks run, and that the ship or the coach stands still? How does it abridge the sun to the compass of a few spans, to a small ignoble circumference? It follows therefore, that we cannot be assured of the truth of that knowledge that commences upon the fallible report of sense, indeed no more than we can be certain that a thing is true, because a known liar has affirmed it.

2dly, Knowledge is properly the apprehension of a thing by its cause; but the causes of things are not certainly known: this by most is confessed, but may be proved without confession; for since none ever assigned a certain cause of any effect, but that others, with the same probability, have assigned a clear different cause, it is most evident, that we do not certainly know the causes of things, and consequently neither the things themselves.

3dly, To know a thing is to apprehend it as really it is, but we apprehend things only as they appear; so that all our knowledge may properly be defined the apprehension of appearances. But now it is undeniable, that things oftentimes appear otherwise than they are; and when they do appear as indeed they are,

are, yet there is no certain rule to discern that they do so.

Other arguments might be brought to shew, that it is not without cause that there is such a sect of men as scepticks in the world. And tho' I will not say, that these arguments prove that there is no such thing as knowledge, yet thus much, at least, they seem to prove, that we cannot be assured that there is any such thing.

But you will reply, that this overthrows the hypothesis of the text, which supposes and takes it for granted that there is such a thing as knowledge. I answer, it does not; for the arguments proceed against knowledge, strictly and accurately so taken; but the text speaks of it in a popular way, of that which the world commonly calls and esteems knowledge.

And that this is but a poor, worthless thing, and of no efficacy to advance the real concerns of human happiness, might be made most evident.

For, first, it is certain that knowledge does not either constitute or alter the condition of things, but only transcribe and represent the face of nature as it finds it; and therefore is but a low, ignoble thing, and differs as much from nature itself, as he that only reports great things from him that does them. If I should run through the whole series and scale of sciences,

sciences, from top to bottom, I am sure I could verify this assertion.

For what am I, or any one else, the better, whether God foresees future contingents from the determination and decree of his will, or from the infinite actuality of his nature, by which his existence is before-hand with all future duration?

What am I concerned, whether he punishes sin by the necessary egress of his vindictive justice, or by a freedom of choice?

Of what such great necessity is it to know, whether Christ intended his death for all mankind, or only for a select company? when it is certain on both sides, that the benefit of his death is offered conditionally to all those, and only to those, who shall believe; and that upon either supposition, this proposition shall surely be verified, that whosoever believes shall be saved.

And to descend to things of an inferior nature. What is it to me, whether the will has a power to determine itself, or is determined by objects from without? when it is certain, that those here that hold a different opinion, yet continue in the same course and way of action.

Is any use of human life served by the knowledge of this, whether the vegetative, sensitive, and rational soul in man, be three distinct souls, or only three denominations, from

from three distinct operations and offices issuing from the same soul?

Or am I any ways advantaged, whether the soul *wills*, *understands*, and *performs* the rest of its actions by faculties distinct from itself, or immediately by its own substance?

Is it of any moment, whether the soul of man comes into the world with carnal notions, or whether it comes bare, and receives all from the after-reports of sense?

What am I benefited, whether the sun moves about the earth, or whether the sun is the center of the world, and the earth is indeed a planet, and wheels about that? Whether it be one or the other, I see no change in the course of nature. Day and night keep the same order; winter and summer observe the same returns; our fruit ripens as soon under one hypothesis as under the other; and the day begins no sooner nor stays any longer with *Ptolomy* than with *Copernicus*.

Or what am I bettered, whether all motion is performed by faculties, powers, or inherent qualities; or in a mechanical way, by the impulse of one body upon another, the greater overcoming and moving the less?

Who in the world finds any change in his affairs, whether there be little vacuities and empty spaces in the air; or whether there is no space, but what is filled and took up with body?

What

What am I altered, whether colour be a quality emergent from the different temperature of the elements; or whether it be only the reflection of the light upon the different situation of the parts of the body?

I could reckon up an hundred more such problems as these, about an enquiry into which men are so laborious, and in a supposed resolution of which they so much boast; which shews, that that which passes with the world for knowledge is but a slight, trivial thing; and that men's being so eager and industrious in the quest of it, is like sweeping the house, raising the dust, and keeping a great do only to find pins.

II. Pass we now to the second thing; which is to shew, How that knowledge is the cause of sorrow, in respect of the laborious and troublesome acquisition of it. For is there any labour comparable to that of the brain? any toil like a continual digging in the mines of knowledge? any pursuit so dubious and difficult as that of truth? any attempt so sublime as to give a reason of things?

When a man must be lead a long trace, from the effect up to an hidden, remote cause, and then back again, take a survey of the several virtues and active qualities of that cause, in its many and numerous effects:

Will an ordinary industry be able to break open those rarities that God and nature has locked up, and set out of the reach of a vulgar

gar endeavour ! how hard is it to draw a principle into all its consequences, and to unravel the mysterious fertility but of one proposition !

A man must be always engaged in difficult speculation, and endure all the inconveniencies that attend it ; which indeed are more and greater than attend any other sort of life whatsoever.

The soldier, it is confessed, converses with dangers, and looks death in the face ; but then he bleeds with honour, he grows pale gloriously, and dies with the same heat and fervour that gives life to others.

But he does not, like the scholar, kill himself in cold blood ; sit up and watch when there is no enemy ; and, like a silly fly, buz about his own candle till he has consumed himself.

Then again ; The husbandman, who has the toil of sowing and reaping, he has his reward in his very labour ; and the same corn that employs, also fills his hand. He who labours in the field indeed wearies, but then he also helps and preserves his body.

But study, it is a weariness without exercise, a laborious sitting still, that wracks the inward, and destroys the outward man ; that sacrifices health to conceit, and cloaths the soul with the spoils of the body ; and, like a stronger blast of lightning, not only meets the sword, but also consumes the scabbard.

Nature

Nature allows men a great freedom, and never gave an appetite but to be an instrument of enjoyment; nor made a desire, but in order to the pleasure of its satisfaction. But he that will increase knowledge, must be content not to enjoy; and not only to cut off the extravagancies of luxury, but also to deny the lawful demands of convenience, to forswear delight, and look upon pleasure as his mortal enemy.

He must call that study, that is indeed confinement; he must converse with solitude, walk, eat, and sleep thinking, read volumes, devour the choicest authors, and (like *Pharaoh's* kine) after he has devoured all, look lean and meagre. He must be willing to be weak, sickly, and consumptive; even to forget when he is an hungry, and to digest nothing but what he reads.

He must read much, and perhaps meet with little; turn over much trash for one grain of truth; study antiquity till he feels the effects of it; and, like the cock in the fable, seek pearls in a dunghil, and perhaps rise to it as early. This is,

Esse quod Arcefilas ærumnosque Solones :
to be always wearing a meditating countenance, to ruminate, mutter, and talk to a man's self, for want of better company: in short, to do all those things, which in other men are counted madness, but in a scholar pass for his profession.

We

We may take a view of all those callings, to which learning is necessary, and we shall find that labour and misery attends them all. And first, for the study of physick: Do not many lose their own health, while they are learning to restore it to others? Do not many shorten their days, and contract incurable diseases, in the midst of *Galen* and *Hippocrates*? get consumptions amongst receipts and medicines, and die while they are conversing with remedies?

Then for the law: Are not many called to the grave, while they are preparing for a call to the bar? Do they not grapple with knots and intricacies, perhaps not so soon dissolved as themselves? Do not their bodies wither and decay, and, after a long study of the law, look like an estate that has passed through a long suit in law?

But, above all, let the divine here challenge the greatest share; who, if he takes one in ten in the profit, I am sure, may claim nine in ten in the labour. 'Tis one part of his business, indeed, to prepare others for death; but the toil of his function is like to make the first experiment upon himself.

People are apt to think this an easy work, and that to be a divine is nothing else but to wear black, to look severely, and to speak confidently for an hour; but confidence and propriety is not all one; and if we fix but upon

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this one part of his employment as easy as it seems to be,

Expertus multum fudes, multumque labores.

But the divine's office spreads itself into infinite other occasions of labour; and, in those that reach the utmost of so great a profession, it requires depth of knowledge, as well as heights of eloquence.

To sit and hear is easy, and to censure what we have heard much easier. But whatsoever his performance is, it inevitably puts us upon an act of religion; if good, it invites us to a profitable hearing; if otherwise, it inflicts a short penance, and gives an opportunity to the virtue of patience.

But, in sum, to demonstrate and set forth the divine's labour, I shall but add this, that he is the only person to whom the whole œconomy of christianity gives no cessation, nor allows him so much as the sabbath for a day of rest.

III. *and lastly*, Knowledge increases sorrow, in respect of its effects and consequents; in three of which I shall give instance.

1st, The first effect of the increase of knowledge, is an increase of the desire of knowledge. It is the covetousness of the understanding, the dropsy of the soul, that drinks itself a-thirst, and grows hungry with surfeit and satisfaction; it is the only thing in which reason itself is irrational.

Now,

Now, an endless desire does of necessity vex and torment the person that has it. For misery and vexation is properly nothing else but an eager appetite not satisfied.

He that is always a getting, is always looking upon himself as in want. And he that is perpetually desiring to know, is perpetually thinking of himself ignorant; namely, in respect of those things that he desires to know.

In fine, happiness is fruition; but there is no fruition where there is a constant desire. For enjoyment swallows up desire, and that which fulfils the expectation also ends it.

But while desire is active and vigorous, and the mind still a craving and reaching at somewhat, it supposes our happiness to be at a distance; for no man reaches after what he has already.

The bottomless appetite of knowledge will not be satisfied, and then we know that sorrow is the certain result, and inseparable companion of dissatisfaction.

2dly, The second unhappy effect of knowledge is, that it rewards its followers with the miseries of poverty, and cloaths them with rags. Reading of books consumes the body, and buying of them the estate.

The mind of man is a narrow thing, and cannot master several employments; it is wholly employed, whether in the pursuit of riches, or in the quest of learning, and no man grew either rich or learned merely by the diversion of his spare hours.

He therefore that buries his strength, his thoughts, his opportunities in a book, can he possibly be rich, unless Providence itself should trade for him, the *Exchange* follow him, and the *Indies* travel to him? but certainly these would be vain expectations. The east now-a-days affords no such wise men, that will take a long journey, only to make presents, and to give of their gold and their treasures.

Hence it is that the learned man and the philosopher, *omnia sua secum portat*; he numbers no flocks, tells no acres of ground, has no variety or change of raiment, and is not solicitous *which* but *what* he shall put on: He never aspires to any purchase, unless perhaps of some dead man's study; at the same time buying the relicks of another's death, and the instruments of his own.

Hereupon he is put to the worst, and the most discouraging of all miseries, which is, to be beholden and obliged. For what was *Aristotle* without his *Alexander*? *Virgil* without *Augustus*? *Horace* without *Mecænas*? and other poets, like their own wreaths of joy, they were always creeping about something for a support. A scholar without a patron is insignificant. He must have something to lean upon. He is like an unhappy cause, always depending.

We read of the prophet's accommodation and furniture in the house of the *Shunamite*, *2 Kings* iv. 10. *A little chamber, a table, a stool,*

stool, and a candlestick; and perhaps, if he had lived there for any considerable time, he would have been reckoned not so much one of the inhabitants, as part of the furniture of the house.

These are the happy effects of study and knowledge; and as most kinds of study hinder men from getting estates, so there are some that cannot be undertook without an estate, nor long pursued without the loss of it. As for instance; he that follows chemistry must have riches to throw away upon the study of it; whatever he gets by it, those furnaces must be fed with gold. In short, I will not say, that the study of knowledge always finds men poor, but sure it is, that 'tis seldom or never but it leaves them so.

3dly, The third fatal effect of knowledge is, that it makes the person who has it the butt of envy, the mark of obloquy and contention. Whoever sees another more knowing than himself, he presently thinks him a reproach to his understanding; and altho' he himself will not undergo the labour of knowledge, yet he will not allow another the same.

Hence come all the jars between learned men, the invectives and bitter books, the wars of criticks, and the controversies of the schools, all managed with such keenness and virulence, throwing dirt, and disgorging daggers at one another's reputation; for no other injury

in the world, but because the adverse party is thought to know more.

As *Grotius*, in one of his poems, speaking of knowledge, and the invidiousness of it, not inelegantly expresses it,

*Quàm nil sit illud quod vocamus his scire,
Quo nos superbi tollimus caput cælo.
Calcamus alios, invicemque calcamur.*

To trample, and to be trampled upon; to write, and to be writ against, is the lot of and learned, the effect of learning, as it lies under the malign aspect of a constant emulation.

Now one would think that envy, which like fire aspires as well as consumes, and always soars and strikes high, should not prey upon a poor threadbare philosopher.

Yet, if a man ventures but out of the old road, and attempts to enlarge the borders of philosophy, by the introduction of some new method, or the discovery of some unheard-of invention, some new phænomena in nature, what a tragical outcry is presently raised against him, all the world pecking at him, and about his ears!

How are *Galileo* and *Copernicus* persecuted, and *Descartes* worried by almost every pen! Dreadful are the censures thundered out against them, both from the press and the pulpit, especially by those puny, systematical theologues, whose philosophy never went beyond
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Keckerman, nor their divinity beyond *Wollebuis*, and who would have all things new in the church, but nothing in the schools.

Thus must a man spend his fortune, consume his time, and wrack his brain, and all to produce some birth that is like to be devoured as soon as born; to have his labours stifled or trod upon, his knowledge railed down, and his person exposed to the violence of those who are never witty but in their malice, nor extraordinary in any thing, but ill behaviour.

And now, if this be our lot, what remains for us to determine upon? Is there no way to get out of this unhappy dilemma, but that we must needs either dash upon the sorrows of knowledge, or the baseness of ignorance? Why yes, there is a fair escape left us; for God has not placed mankind under a necessity either of sin or misery. And therefore, as to the matter in hand, it is only to continue our labour, but to alter the scene of it; and to make him, that is the great author, also the subject of our knowledge. For tho' there is a vanity, a sorrow, and dissatisfaction in the knowledge of created, inferior objects, yet we are assured *that it is life eternal to know God, and whom he has sent, his son Christ Jesus.*

To which God, the fountain of all true wisdom and understanding, giving freely to those that ask, and upbraiding none, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N X.

P S A L M lxvi. 18.

*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the
Lord will not hear me.*

THIS psalm is *David's* grateful commemoration of all God's mercies, together with a retribution of praise, the only recompence and return, that the poor sons of men are able to make for divine favours. And *David*, as standing in a double relation, first of a king and publick parent, under which he did not only govern, but represent his people; and, secondly, of a saint of God, under which notion it was his business to regard the peculiar interest of his own soul; so accordingly he does proportion his praises to these two several conditions: First, as he was a publick person and a king, he gives thanks to God for publick mercies; for he whose duty it was to love his people as himself, it was also

also his duty to esteem all mercies shewn to his people, at a second hand, shewn to himself. And this he does from the first to the thirteenth verse; where he praises God in respect of the glory of his majesty, and the greatness of his power, which he had often employed in the miraculous deliverance of his people, from the first verse to the eighth. And then for his mercy and faithfulness, not only in ridding them out of adversity, but, by seasonable afflictions, securing them from the greater danger of prosperity: and this he does from the eighth verse to the thirteenth. And, secondly, as one of God's saints, so he takes a more especial thankful notice of the personal favours that God had conferred upon him: and this he does from the thirteenth verse to the end of the psalm. Wherein, for the *manner* of the duty, we may observe, that it is praise. As prayer is an asking or craving, so praise is a giving and returning; therefore not only a spiritual, but a kingly work; and consequently most befitting *David*, who was in his days not only the most religious of men, but the best of kings. And it was that which gave him no less a preheminance above other saints, than his crown gave him prerogative over his people, that he was a man of praises, of all others the most frequent and earnest in this duty: which, in this sense, excels prayer; inasmuch as gratitude is more laudable than a craving desire.

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It was *David's* best, his greatest and most lasting praise, that he made it his business to praise God. Secondly, for the *matter* of this praise; it was not things carnal, as the establishing his crown, and the enlarging his dominions, but it was spiritual; as in the sixteenth verse, *I will declare what he has done for my soul.*

Now in this acknowledgment of his we may observe, that the greatest argument of his praise was the sense of God's gracious hearing his prayer, as appears from the two last verses, where in the verse immediately foregoing, containing the words of my text, he insinuates the reason of the success of his prayers, by shewing what would have hindered that success. He says, *If he had regarded iniquity in his heart, God would not have heard him*; therefore he implies, that his integrity, in not regarding it, was the reason that God did hear him. And thus I have given you the resolution and model of the whole psalm, and therein the occasion of these words that I have read unto you, together with the connexion they have with the foregoing and following verses.

The words may be considered two ways:

1st, As they have a peculiar reference to *David* and his particular condition; and so they are a vehement asseveration of his integrity. We read the words thus; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not bear me.* But the *Septuagint* has it, *μη εὐχαριστῶ μὴ Θεῷ*; that

that is, *let not God hear me.* And so they are *David's* avouchment of his uprightness, by an imprecation, or calling for a curse upon himself, namely, God's not hearing his prayers, in case he was not really so upright, as in words he did protest himself to be. Thus *Job* also testifies his integrity in *Job xxxi. 7, 8.* *If my steps have turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and any blot have cleaved to my hands; then let me sow, and let another eat.* All this is an earnest protestation of *Job's* steadfast walking before God. And thus the words hold forth a testimony of *David's* uprightness; and, compared with the following verses, are not only a testimony, but a clear proof of it; and that in a perfect hypothetical syllogism. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me:* then it follows, in the next verse; *But verily, God hath heard me:* and, adding the conclusion, *therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart.* It amounts to a full argumentation, proving the sincerity of *David's* heart. Here we may note, as *David* does evince his integrity from the success of his prayers, as a sign and consequent of that integrity; so the hypocrite, or sinner, may invert the argument, and collect the future unsuccessfulness of all his prayers, from his want of integrity; and that not only as a sign, but as the proper cause of that unsuccessfulness; in this manner, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me:* now the hypocrite must assume, *But*

I regard iniquity in my heart : therefore he must also conclude, *God will not hear me* ; he will have no respect unto my prayers, And thus much concerning the first consideration of the words.

2dly, The words may be considered absolutely in themselves, and so applicable to all men. In this sense they are a positive direction laid down in negative terms, and prescribing the way of our sincere worship of God. For interpreters do generally agree, that although *David*, in these words, intends to attest his own integrity, yet he does also no less intend to give men a rule for the regulation of their holy worship. For, by telling us that God does not respect the prayers of those that regard iniquity in their hearts, he does intimate, that the acceptation of all our holy services before God, is grounded upon the inward, hearty sincerity of our souls ; and therefore it ought to be our duty, both in point of reverence to God, and wisdom for our own interest, never to engage in any holy performance, without this sincerity ; but especially in prayer, wherein men have the nearest address to God ; and consequently, upon their sincerity, may here chiefly expect a blessing ; and, upon the want of it, fear a judgment. I shall consider the words in this latter general sense ; and so deduce from them an observation, not much distinct from the words themselves : for only by resolving
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them, as they lie in supposition, into a positive assertion, they afford us this doctrine :

Whoſoever regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not bear him.

Or yet more plainly ;

A man's regarding or loving any ſin in his heart, will certainly hinder his prayers from having any acceptance with God.

In the proſecution of this doctrine, I ſhall ſhew,

- I. What it is for a man to regard or love ſin in his heart.
- II. What it is to have our prayers accepted with God.
- III. How regarding or loving ſin in the heart, hinders a man's prayers from being thus accepted.
- IV. Application.

I. Concerning the firſt : A man may be ſaid ſeveral ways to love or regard ſin in his heart.

1^{ſt}, There is a conſtant and habitual love of ſin in the unregeneracy and corrupt eſtate of the ſoul. For a man, as conſidered in his pure, or rather his impure naturals, has not only a ſtrong, but an univerſal love to ſin. Sin was born, and lay in the ſame womb with every man ; therefore he muſt needs love it as his brother. Now, as union is generally ſtated the effect of love, therefore, ſince
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the union between sin and our nature is so close, we may thence also collect, that the love is very great. In this sense sin and the corruption thereof is stiled the flesh; not only by a metonymy of the subject for the adjunct, because sin has its place and residence in the flesh; but also for the tender love and affection that we bear to it: for, as the apostle says, in *Ephes. v. 29. No man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it*; and withal, because we continually carry it about us. A man may as well go abroad, and leave his body and his flesh behind him, as an unregenerate man go any whither not attended by his sin. It is called sometimes the body of sin, and that deservedly, because it is so nearly united to the soul. The scripture has several expressions, shewing the cursed habitual love that a natural man bears to his sin. Sometimes 'tis called his *right eye*, *Matth. xviii. 9.* than which nothing is more dear. God himself sometimes expresses the greatness of his love to his children, in the same terms: he regards them as the *apple of his eye*. To have one's eye continually upon any thing, argues a great love of it; but to account it as the eye itself, shews a love more than ordinary. Elsewhere, sin is called our *right hand*, *Mark ix. 43.* the member of use and execution; and therefore most carefully tendered by man, whose nature it is to be in continual action. How dear it is, the

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common expreffion demonstrates; we say of an extraordinary and beloved friend, he is our right hand. It is also placed and lodged in the heart, *Jerem.* xvii. 9. which in every sinner, as it is the original of natural life, so it is the principle and fountain of spiritual death. Sin, it is the *primum vivens*, and the *ultimum moriens*; life the heart itself, which harbours it in every finally, impenitent sinner: so exceedingly beloved, that many unregenerate men vouchsafe even to live and die with their sins; which is the highest pitch of love imaginable. Again, in *Job* xv. 16. the wicked is said to drink iniquity like water. No appetite so strong as that of thirst. Hence, as it is the peculiar distinguishing property of the godly to thirst after righteousness, *Mat.* v. 6. so it is of the wicked to thirst after iniquity; who quenches his present desire of sin with the actual commission of it; as a man does his thirst, that is, both with vehemence and delight. 'Tis proper only to the drunkard to make his drink his sin; but it is the nature of every carnal man (if you will admit of the expreffion) to account his sin as desirable as his drink: But that we may yet further see, how a natural man loves, tenders, and regards his sin; there is nothing dear and lovely to us, but the spirit of God expresses sin by that. What more to be prized than our eyes, or hands? What can or ought to be more dear to us, than our heart? more desired

fired than our food, or more amiable than life? Yet sin (we see) ingrosses all the affections that ought to be distributed amongst all these. This love is yet more evident from the service a carnal man does for his sin, who bears rule over him, from his own voluntary subjection. It is the nature of love, where it is excessive, to enslave a man to the commands of the party whom he loves: As *Jacob* did for *Rachel*, so a wicked man for his sin; he will serve many years for it, and they shall seem but a few days, because of the love he bears to it. What God and nature has bestowed on man, that, man has made a full and total resignation of to sin, to be commanded, used, and employed by it: the understanding is busied to contrive iniquity; the senses to purvey and bring in provender for it, in the representation of sinful objects; the will to command and govern in the name of sin; the outward powers and members to execute those commands: so that the whole frame and structure of man is principled, and, as it were, even animated by sin: for, first, it has general rule and possession of all the faculties; and, secondly, of all the actions that flow from those faculties. And then, for the perpetuity, and constant course of those actions, *Gen. vi. 5. They are sinful continually, and without any intermission.* In short, he that regards iniquity in his heart, in this habitual way, he so regards it as he
neither

neither does or can regard any thing else. For the force and activity of man's mind is a limited force; and, as it is with our attention, so it is also with our love, it cannot be vehement and intense at the same time, upon two different objects. Now, from what has been said, it follows, that in this manner a regenerate person cannot love or regard sin; and all unregenerate do.

2dly, There is a regarding of sin in the heart, that consists in an unmortified habit or course of sin: this is much different from the former, because even a child of God may thus regard sin, from the relicks of corrupt nature, fired and stirred up by satan's temptations; for the model of a regenerate state is, like that of the body, mixed and compounded of contrary principles, grace, and corruption, as that is of contrary elements. And, as the elements, in the composure of the body, have their qualities allayed and refracted; so these habits of grace and corruption, as they are in a regenerate soul, are not in their utmost degree and extremity. For, if grace were in its full height and latitude, there could be no corruption; which is a bliss rather to be wished for, than ever enjoyed in this life. And, on the other hand, if corruption were in its full extent or degree, there could be no grace, and so no regeneration. For it is the nature of contraries, that one arising to its highest pitch, does, by consequence,

sequence, expel and devour the other. Wherefore grace and corruption are joined and con-tempered in a believing soul, from which conjunction arises a possibility of the entertainment of sinful habits and dispositions, even in the regenerate, tho' not such as are found in the unregenerate : in the one they defile indeed and pollute ; in the other they prevail and domineer : in the one they separate from the sense of God's love ; in the other, they take away all interest in it. Now, that there may be such sinful dispositions or habits in believers, may be evinced ;

1st, From example : When *David* had committed that gross sin of murder and adultery, if we compute the time from his sin, to his repentance, which was dated from *Nathan's* coming to him, we shall find that he continued in it for the space of a year. Now we must know, every intense and vehement action leaves a suitable disposition behind it upon the faculty, which, if seconded by actions of the same kind, or not weakened and destroyed by actions of a contrary nature, it daily gathers strength, and gets root and fixation in the mind, till it at length becomes a sinful habit, very difficultly to be removed. So that *David*, after the commission of so great a sin, must needs have had a further inclination to it left upon his spirit, which, by reason also of the compliance it found with his natural corruption, daily grew more and more

more fixed ; for, although he did not reiterate it by other external actions, yet by his internal desires and approbations he did increase and confirm it ; for it cannot be imagined but that he entertained those approbations of it as long as he defer'd his repentance. Here-upon he found the work of repentance so hard, and his sin so hardly moveable, when he set about the penitent removal of it : so that he cries, *Psalms* v. 38. *My wounds stink and are corrupt, by reason of my foolishness.* A wound immediately cured, soon after it was given, cannot stink or grow noisome. It is clear, then, that *David* was not only guilty of sin, but also of continuance in sin ; who, notwithstanding he was a son of God, and truly regenerate, yet had his heart overrun with a sinful habit and disposition.

2dly, It may be proved from scripture-reason, which is grounded upon those exhortations that are there made even to believers for the mortification of sin ; as peculiarly, that, *Rom.* viii. 13. the apostle exhorts even those to mortify the deeds of the flesh, who were truly ingrafted into Christ ; for they were such as he said, in the first verse, *were justified ; such, to whom there was no condemnation :* also he bids them mortify sin *by the spirit ;* but the spirit is to be found in none but the regenerate. Now, to mortify sin, is not properly to forbear one or many sinful actions, but it is the weakening, or destroying a course

or habit of sin. Comparing therefore the nature of the duty with the qualification of the persons to whom it was enjoined, the apostle must seem to insinuate a possibility that even believers may be entangled and overtook in a sinful course.

This therefore is the second kind of regarding sin in the heart ; and the soul may thus love or regard sin two ways :

1st, First, directly, and by a positive pursuance of it ; as the following of one action by another ; the backing of one sinful deed by a greater ; when sin reigns by a cursed kind of succession ; when one wicked action expires, another presently succeeds.

2^{dly}, Indirectly, and by not attempting a vigorous mortification of it. In the former sense, we cherish sin, by giving it food ; in this second, by not taking that which it has away. Not to resist sin, and that by an indefatigable watching, striving, and praying against it, is to love it. He that does not attempt the utter ruin and death of it, does not hate it : for hatred no less than love is an active restless quality, and cannot quiet itself, but in the destruction of the thing it hates. Can there be hatred, where there is agreement ? Can we banish sin from our hearts, and yet hold it in our bosoms ? He that is not against his sin, in a lively resistance, is for it in his affections. He that does not oppose the tempter, invites him. He that hinders not the occasion

cession of his sin, tacitly wishes the event. *Qui non prohibet cum debet, imperat.* What mortification of sin is, in the nature, causes, and means of it, is not my present business to discourse; but let it suffice to note thus much, that it is a steady, thorough course of repentance, and severe humiliation: and he that does not, by a continual rigid exercise of these duties, by hacking at the root of sin, bears a secret longing to the fruit.

And thus much of this second kind of love to sin; which consists in the cherishing an unmortified lust.

3dly, There is yet another kind of regarding sin in the heart, and that is, by an actual intention of the mind upon sin; *If I regard iniquity*: the *Latin* renders it, *si aspexissem iniquitatem*; if I did behold, if I cast a gracious aspect upon sin. True it is, that the most sincere, if they look upon their heart, must also look upon sin; but then they view it another way: the wicked look upon it with an eye of complacency and delight; the sincere, with an eye of hatred and detestation. The same sin, in a wicked and a godly eye, has a contrary hew; as the same colour, through different glasses, is conveyed under a different representation. Now, *to look upon*, signifies *to be intent upon*; the actions of the eye, by an easy metaphor, signifying the intention of the mind. Interpreters, in their expositions upon this place, unanimously

run this way, *Si aspexissem iniquitatem*; that is, *si pravâ intentione illum deprecatur fuisset*, says one; *aspicere iniquitatem est peccato intentum esse & addictum*, says another: or, as *Mollerus* has it, *cum proposito perseverandi in delicto contra conscientiam*; to regard iniquity in our heart, is to address ourselves to God in prayer, with a purpose or intention of persevering in some sin, condemned and disallowed by our own conscience. And it is added (*in the heart*) to shew how little the outward duty avails, without inward uprightness. We may have clean hands, and yet a foul heart; that is, be free from the external commission of sin, yet defiled with the desires of it. We may regard it in our minds and intentions, while we declare against it in our professions; wherefore these ought chiefly to be rectified. Having thus shewn that there are three several ways of loving or regarding sin, I conceive the words are to be understood principally in this last sense, tho' not exclusively to the former; for it implies and takes them in, *à fortiore*. For, if the actual intention of sin will hinder our prayers from being accepted, then much more a sinful disposition, or wicked course, as long as cherished and continued in: and if a sinful disposition disannul our prayers, then much more a state of unregeneracy. We may look upon these three under this difference. The purpose or intention of sin differs

fers from a sinful disposition in respect of the duration and continuance of it. 'Tis confessed, a sinful intention may be improved into a sinful course; but, considered as such, it *implies* no more than a bare intention; and, if cast off by an immediate repentance, it will *be* no more. Next, a sinful disposition differs from a state of unregeneracy, inasmuch as the precise nature of it neither implies prevalence, nor a graceless condition of the party in whom it is, both of which are absolutely implied in the other.

I have now done with the first general head, *viz.* to shew what it is to regard iniquity in the heart. I proceed to the

IId, Which is to shew, what it is to have our prayers accepted with God: and this is to prevail with God for the obtaining the good thing we desire, by virtue of an interest in Jesus Christ, and in the covenant of grace: this is clear, from that general received truth, that the acceptance of our prayers is founded upon the acceptance of our persons: and this, we know, is from an interest in Christ: here-upon Christ teaches his disciples the way of making their prayers successful; *John xvi. 24. Whatsoever ye ask the father in my name, he will give it you*; that is, what you ask, upon the score of that title and interest that you have in my merits. If it here be excepted, that although it indeed prescribes asking in his name, as a means of having our prayers

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granted,

granted, yet he does not exclude other means. *I answer* : That by commanding us so frequently to ask in his name, he does imply, that there is no other way of asking aright, so as to speed in the things we request ; for, if there was some other way, this exhortation were of little or no force. Hence, in *Rev. viii. 3.* we read of incense that was mingled, and offered with the prayers of the saints ; by which incense is meant the sweet savour of the meritorious sufferings of Christ, which alone was able to give virtue and value to those prayers, which of themselves had none. And thus, by shewing what it is to have our prayers accepted, by the same is also manifest, who they are who have their prayers thus accepted ; namely, those alone who have a portion in him ; who cannot only ask of his father, but also demand an answer for them ; who can take what comes from our polluted lips, and perfume it with the incense of his own merits. I shall further assert and prove this truth, by removing some objections, which will naturally arise from what has been already said.

Objection. If the acceptance of our prayers bears upon the foundation of our interest in Christ, whence then is it that God hears the prayers of the wicked, who are void of all such interest ? as particularly appears in *Ahab*, a sinner of the first magnitude, no where mentioned in scripture, but with some distinguishing

guishing mark of impiety; yet, upon the intervention of his prayer and humiliation, God repeals a judgment denounced against him, and, from his own days, translates it to his son. *I answer*: That God, indeed, often seconds the prayers of the wicked with a blessing; but he does not give the blessing with any respect to their prayers, as the procuring cause of that blessing. But, it may be *replied*; That neither are the prayers of the righteous any way a meritorious and procuring cause of any good thing from God; since the most exact of our endeavours are tainted with imperfection: so that, after all, we have cause to sit down as unprofitable servants. *I answer*: That the prayers of the righteous are not the procuring cause of any blessing; by virtue of any inherent merit in them; but by virtue of the free covenant and promise of God, who has engaged, upon the fervent and unfeigned prayers of the faithful, to grant their requests. But, if it be further urged, that God says, *Because Ahab humbled himself, I will not bring the evil threatened in his days,* 1 Kings xxi. 29, therefore it seems, that *Ahab's* prayer had a causal influence as to the procurement of that merciful reprieve. To this *I answer*, That such expressions as signify causality, are often applied to those things that are only *occasions* of such events. And so it is here: *Ahab's* humiliation was no ways a procuring cause of that mercy; neither

neither by any meritorious virtue residing in it, for the prayers of the wicked merit nothing but a denial; nor yet by any virtue that it has from any covenant made by God, who is so far from making any promise of hearing the prayers of the wicked, that he has expressly promised that he will not hear them. It was therefore only an occasion of this mercy, that is, the mercy so depended upon it, as if that humiliation had not been, or he had never enjoyed the mercy; however, it was no cause of the mercy, neither deserving, nor procuring. As for instance; if a rich man engage to relieve some beggars, upon their coming to his door and asking; although this their beggarly address has no value in it to demerit a reward, yet, by virtue of the rich man's promise and engagement, they may challenge it; now if he give the like alms to other beggars, to whom he had made no such promises, only upon their importunity; this their importunity does here neither deserve, nor can challenge an alms; yet it may be said properly to occasion it, inasmuch as, if it had not been for this, they had gone without it. And thus, I think, it is clear, that God may *bestow* upon the wicked the matter they pray for, and yet not *bear* their prayers; that he may *grant* them, and yet never *accept* them. And, let me add another thing, that discriminates the prayers of the wicked from those of the faithful; that, although God often gives them the thing

thing they desired, yet he never gives it with an intent of mercy. Thus he gave the *Israelites* quails, but withal sent leanness into their bones. He so gives the thing, as he still with-holds the *blessing*. When we are importuned by any one for something against our will, we at length cast it to him, with anger; so I may say, God, being wearied with the restless, importunate cravings of a sinner, does not so much give, as rather angrily throw an outward blessing at him, whose very prayer is a sin; for what is it but a kind of extortion towards God himself. What we usually say amongst ourselves in ceremony, that is here verified in respect of God; that in all his bounty, not so much the substance of the gift, as the mind of the giver, is to be valued and regarded: yea, as God may, and often does deny some of the prayers of the righteous, out of love and mercy; so, out of anger and judgment, he grants the prayers of the wicked: whose very petitions are oftentimes their severest indictment; and their most devout requests may be interpreted into an imprecation.

It may *objected*, if those that are in a state of sin regard iniquity in their heart, how then is it possible to get out of that estate; for how can they do it but by addressing themselves to God? and how can they address themselves unto God but by prayer? and we have already shewn,

shewn, that the condition they are in, renders their prayers ineffectual.

To this I answer; That in their first serious resolution and purpose to turn to God, they pass from the state of sinners into the state of the penitent, and are such in God's account; and so, consequently, there is a change of their condition. For, altho' it cannot be said, that they have repented, yet they are then repenting; tho', like the prodigal, they are not come home to their heavenly father, yet they are upon their journey. We must know repentance has several acceptations; it may be either taken for the change and alteration of the corrupt qualities of our nature, and so it is the same with sanctification, and follows faith, as the effect does its cause; and in this sense a wicked man, in his present estate, is not immediately capable of repentance. Secondly, repentance may be taken for a sincere alteration of a man's sinful purposes and intentions; and so it precedes faith, and a wicked man ought and may repent; it is a duty immediately incumbent upon him in order to his salvation. Altho', when I say a wicked man may repent, and thereupon his prayers be acceptable to God; we must distinguish between the instant immediately going before his repentance, in respect of which only he is to be termed wicked; and the instant of his repentance, in respect of which he is become another man. In the same sense, therefore, that

that the wicked may be said to repent, they may be said to have their prayers and services accepted; that is, the wicked antecedently so taken, and (as they speak, *in sensu diviso*) to wit, before the instant of their repentance, not concomitantly, and *in sensu composito*; the wicked as such, and while he is such, can neither repent nor pray, nor have any audience or acceptance at the throne of grace.

And thus much concerning the second general head, *viz.* to shew what it is to have our prayers accepted with God. I proceed now to the

III^d Thing, to shew whence it is that a man's regarding or loving sin in his heart hinders his prayers from acceptance with God.

Ist, The first Reason is, because in this case he cannot pray by the spirit. All prayers that are acceptable with God are the breathings of his own spirit within us. Rom. viii. 26. *We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with sighs and groans, that cannot be uttered.* As without the intercession of Christ we cannot have our prayers accepted, so without the intercession of the spirit we cannot pray. No prayers can find the way to heaven, but such as first come from thence. Every sincere prayer, it is a beam of the sun of righteousness darted into our hearts, and from thence reflecting back again. But now, as long as sin
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and the love of it has dominion in the soul, the spirit of God is silent; for as prevailing corruption and the spirit cannot cohabit together, so neither can they work together. The motions of sin and of the spirit often struggle in the same heart, as *Pharez* and *Zarah* did in the same womb, in *Gen.* xxxviii. 29. the motions of the spirit put forth their hand, but those of sin prevailing, they drew it back again, and sin comes out first. Wherefore, if any one bears a love and liking to sin, let him never expect to have his prayer accepted, till sin and the spirit concur in the same petition.

2dly, The second Reason is, because as long as a man regards iniquity in his heart, he cannot pray in faith; that is, he cannot build a rational confidence upon any promise that God will accept him. Now faith always respects the promise, and promise of acceptance is made only to the upright: so long, therefore, as men cherish a love of sin in their heart, they either understand not the promises, and so they pray without understanding; or they understand them, and yet misapply them to themselves, and so they pray in presumption: in either case they have little cause to hope for acceptance. This reason naturally issues from the former; for whosoever prays not in the spirit prays not in faith; and every prayer made in faith is also endited by the spirit; only with this distinction, that in every such prayer the spirit
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is the principal agent, and faith the instrumental. Here we may observe, that faith may be either taken for the habit and seed of faith, or for the act and exercise of that habit. Now the unregenerate man has not so much as the habit or principle of faith, and so upon no hand can have his prayers accepted; and he that is truly regenerate, and endued with this principle; yet while he is entangled with the love of sin, cannot act nor exercise that principle, and so neither can his prayers be acceptable. Faith causes the soul fiducially and strongly to rely and cast itself upon God in prayer: love to sin causes the soul to depart and fly off from God. Faith clears up the evidence of our title to the promises; love to sin (altho' we have a title to the promises by conversion) yet it flurs and takes away the evidence; and when this is gone we cannot pray with any life and vigour. But to manifest further the nature of a wicked man's prayer not acted by faith, see Rom. xiv. 23. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* No wonder, therefore, if that which is a sin, and so consequently deserves a curse, cannot prevail for the obtaining a blessing.

Objection. But it may be objected, if, during the time of our regard and love to integrity, our prayers (as not proceeding from faith) are sins, then it is our duty not to pray, since it is the duty of all men to forbear sin.

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I answer. That this consequence is very unreasonable, inasmuch as omission of prayer is of its own nature a sin, and that a greater. And for that maxim, that it is the duty of all to forbear sin, it is to be understood of those actions, that in their own kind and nature are sins, not of those that are such by accident, and the defect of some circumstance; in which case the defect is to be amended, and not the action to be omitted. Now prayer of itself and in its nature is good, and becomes sinful only from some adherent corruption which derives a tincture and defilement upon it; wherefore it ought to be our business to endeavour the removal of this corruption, which weakens, pollutes, and defiles our prayers, and not to cease from prayer itself. And thus much for the second reason.

3dly. The third reason is, because while we regard iniquity in our hearts we cannot pray with fervency; which, next to sincerity, is the great qualification of prayer, to which God has annexed a promise of acceptance, *Matth. xi. 12. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent alone take it by force. Matth. vii. 7. Those only that seek, are like to find, and those that knock, to have admittance;* all which expressions denote vehemence and importunity. Now the cause of vehemence, in our prosecution of any good, is our love of it; for proportionable to the affection we bear to any thing is the earnestness of our desires, and the diligence

diligence of our pursuit after it. So long therefore as the love of sin possesses our hearts, our love to spiritual things is dull, heavy, inactive, and our prayers for them must needs be answerable. O the wretched fallacy that the soul will here put upon itself! At the same time it will love its sin and pray against it; at the same time it will intreat for grace, with a desire not to prevail: as a father confesses of himself, that before his conversion he would pray for chastity, with a secret reserve in his wishes, that God would not grant his prayer. Such are the mysterious, intricate treacheries, by which the love of sin will make a soul deceive and circumvent itself. How languidly and faintly will it pray for spiritual mercies, conscience in the mean while giving the lye to every such petition! The soul, in this case, cannot pray against sin, in earnest; it fights against it, but neither with hope nor intent to conquer; as lovers, usually, in a game one against another, with a desire to lose. So then, while we regard iniquity, how is it possible for us to regard spiritual things, the only lawful object of our prayers? and, if we regard them not, how can we be urgent with God, for the giving of them? And, where there is no fervency on our part, no wonder if there is no answer on God's.

And thus much concerning the reasons, why love to sin hinders the acceptance of our prayers: they would both admit and deserve

a larger handling ; but I pass to the *Application* : which shall be only an use of exhortation to all, that in their prayers they would endeavour to come with hearts free from hypocrisy, and the love of sin ; and, from what has been said, make that conclusion that *Paul* did in 2 *Tim.* ii. 19. *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, (especially in prayer) depart from iniquity.* The prayer will still favour of that which lies in the heart ; as the putrefaction of the inward parts give a noysomness to the breath. God, that would not let *David*, because he had made great wars, and shed much blood, build him a temple ; if thou carriest blood and revenge in thy heart, will not let thee worship in his temple. It was an excellent speech that *Homer* puts into the mouth of *Hector*, in the *third Iliad* ; and, spoken by a christian to the true God, from a principle of faith, might favour of good divinity. When he comes from the fight, and being intreated by his mother to sacrifice to the gods ; ‘ No ; (says he)

Χερσὶ δ' ἀνιπτοῖσιν Διὶ λείβειν αἶδοπα δῖον
 Ἄζομαι· οὐδ' ἐπὶ χειρὶν ἔχει Κρονίωνι
 Αἵματι καὶ λυθρῷ πεπαραγμένον ἐν χεῖράσθαι.

‘ I dread to sacrifice to the gods with unwashed hands ; how much more should the christian to the true God, with an unwashed heart ; for (says he) it is not decent or fitting for a warrior, besmeared with blood and dirt, to present his supplication to God.’
 God

God has declared himself a jealous God, and will be worshipped in truth : but, as long as we have holiness in our tongue, and sin in our heart, we worship him with a lye : and let none think (as *Jacob* did from his father) so from God also, to extort a blessing with a lye. He that under the law, for the most part, was worshipped with the offering of lambs, will, in the gospel-worship, dispence with our bringing them, so we bring their innocence.

To press this duty of sincerity in our worship, we may take these two motives :

1st Motive. By praying to God with insincere, sin-regarding hearts, we incur the certain frustration of all our prayers. And sure, to rational men, that propose to themselves an end in all their actions, it should be some trouble to make long prayers ; and to be answered with nothing but disappointment : to offer a sacrifice, like *Cain*, and for God to have no respect to their sacrifice : *Magno conatu nihil agere* ; in much labour and pains to traffick with heaven for a nothing. This is the end of all hypocritical prayers ; they are only empty words, and accordingly they vanish into wind.

2d Motive. In such prayers we are not only certain not to gain a blessing, but also we incur the danger of an heavy curse. He that comes to the wedding, without a wedding garment, is not only like to miss of the

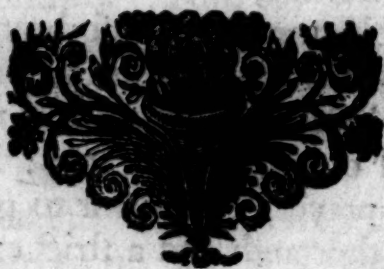
feast, but also to be cast into a prison. If the leprosy of sin cleaves to thy head, God has forbid thee to enter the congregation. If lust lies burning in thy heart, if pride lies swelling in thy bosom, beware and stand off: God has commanded, if any such beast dare approach his holy mountain, that he should be struck through. And he will certainly do it; for he has made ready the sword, and arrows of his vengeance for the same purpose. *Jacob's* argument to his mother was good, that if his father should discern his fraud, he should not only not gain a blessing, but also bring a curse upon himself, *Gen. xxvii. 12.* So when an hypocrite makes his false, yet specious addresses to his heavenly Father for a blessing, God may say to him, Thy voice, indeed, is the voice of an holy *Jacob*, but thy heart is the heart of a profane *Esau*; and accordingly he will curse him, and he shall be cursed. And no wonder; for to engage in prayer, while the heart goes a whoring after sin, what is it else, but to delude and mock the great God! And God has said, that he will not be mocked: he will not endure to have a hypocrite come and affront him to his face: if we pray only in a mockery, God will curse and punish in earnest. If the heart be torn from the body, it becomes a dead body; and the heart, separated from the prayer, makes a dead prayer: and we know, as our Saviour says, *God is not*

a God of the dead, but of the living. Better one sigh and broken expreffion, with fincerity, than the moft long, accurate, and elaborate prayer, with hypocrify. *Gratior eft qui deorum delubres, parum caftamque mentem quam qui meditatam carmen intulerit.* A man that is in confpiracy againft his king, and knows that his king underftands his confpiracy, would he dare come and prefent with a petition ! He that is in love and league with fin, is a traitor and confpirator againft God ; and, had he the fame dread of him that he has of an earthly prince, he would know, that in fuch a cafe it is death to come into his prefence. When fome formal hypocrites fet upon this duty, with their eyes turned up, and fome forced tears, not having their hearts at all affected with the fense of that which they pretend to ; if we confider the vilenefs of the affront, and the infinite majefty of God that is fo affronted, it is an argument of his unconceivable mercy and forbearance, that fuch are not ftruck dead in the place.

But, to direct us how to pray with fincerity, I fhall only give this rule : Before you enter upon prayer, endeavour to prepare your hearts by a thorough and a ftrict examination. This, if any thing, will clear the coaft. Sift yourfelves, by examining, as fatan does by tempting. Search and fhake every corner of your heart. Ranfack every paffage of your life. Believe it, if any one unmortified luft,

one cursed action lies undiscerned, he will trouble the peace of the whole soul. Who-
soever therefore is conscious to himself of any regard or love that he bears to his iniquity, and shall yet venture to make an offering of prayer to God; let such an one *leave his gift upon the altar, and go and reconcile himself to God, in the blood of Jesus Christ; and first sacrifice his sin, and then come and offer, and the sacrifice of his prayer shall be accepted.*

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now, and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N XI.

I JOHN iii. 20.

*God is greater than our heart, and
knoweth all things.*

GOD, the creator of all things, an object fitter for our adoration, than our curious, but yet weak enquiries, is infinite in his being, and so consequently not to be comprehended by our finite understandings: yet, since he is pleased to command us to worship him, which we cannot rationally do, unless in some measure we know him; he is therefore also pleased to aid our weak conceptions, by several expressions of himself, which we call attributes; as, that he is just, wise, merciful, and the like: all which, according to the common notions that men have of justice, wisdom, and mercy, are not strictly and properly to be found in God: so that, indeed, these words, as by us applied

to him, rather testify our reverential desires of honouring him; than at all express his nature. For our words expressing only those ideas and images of things in the mind, all which were conveyed thither through the senses, it is impossible they should properly express the nature of God, which was never comprehended by the short reach of our senses; and therefore they could not report any representation of him to the mind, which might afterwards be expressed in words. And thus, by natural ratiocination, I gather, that these words, just, righteous, and merciful, do not indeed exactly signify the nature and being of God. It is the prerogative of his essence not only to surpass the ken of sense, but also to nonplus the most accurate and sagacious discourses of reason. He laughs at the bold and laborious attempts of our understandings, in comprehending him: and, by his excessive brightness, wards off the eyes of the beholder, and (as we may say, by a seeming contraction, but a real truth) is like the sun, too visible to be seen. And shall we then, poor mortals, think ourselves able to express what we are not so much as able to conceive! And, if our thoughts take in a larger compass and latitude than our expressions, (for, who is it that cannot think more than he speaks?) then, certainly, if we cannot reach his essence, by our most elevated thoughts, much less can we do it by our words. But the same is further

ther demonstrable from the difference of righteousness, mercy, and power, properly so called, from any thing that is in God. For these are all qualities inherent in the soul of man, by virtue whereof he is enabled to act. For the soul being unable of itself, and, by its bare substance, to advance into action, there are requisite therefore these certain qualities, by the instrumental mediation of which, it may exert its several operations. So that the soul, without its respective faculties and qualities to act by, is like an artificer without his tools : But now, it is far otherwise with Almighty God in his workings, whose actions immediately stream from his essence, without the auxiliary intervention of any being distinct from himself. Whereupon it must be granted, that these things, justice, mercy, &c. exist not of themselves, but as they are shouldr'd and propp'd up by the subject in which they are ; and therefore are imperfect beings, and so not properly to be found in God, whose very nature it is to be perfect. And furthermore, as they are always distinct from the essence in which they are, we thence also collect that they are not in God, who is an indivisible, absolute, and uncompound-ed being, in whom there is nothing to be found but what is really himself. But, it may be said ; If these things are so, that righteousness, justice, and mercy, are not really and properly in God ; whence is it that

that the scripture so often attributes these things to him? I answer, in this, as in many other things, it speaks according to the manner of men. In the same sense it attributes hands, eyes, and ears to God, not really, but metaphorically; that by the things we see, we may, in some measure, apprehend him that is invisible. In short, therefore, righteousness, justice, and mercy, are attributed, not according to the reality of the things themselves, but by the analogy of their effects. The meaning is this: God is called merciful, because some of his actions bear a proportion to those that men exercise from a principle of mercy; and powerful, because some of his actions have a similitude to those that men exercise, from a principle of power: and so of the rest. Some say the like of his decrees; who affirm, that God can no more properly be said to decree a thing, than to foreknow it, to whom all things are present. Now, according to the sense of these men, God is said to decree, because some of his actions have a likeness to such actions, as men produce under a decree or resolution. But I forbear, since I am afraid that I have gone too far in these notions already. But being, in my subsequent discourse, to insist upon one of the attributes of God, I thought it convenient to premise something of them in general.

We

We find mention of them all in scripture, and peculiarly the words which I have at present read to you, clearly hold forth his omniscience or infinite knowledge. The words are plain and need no explication; therefore I shall forthwith draw this doctrine from them, not much different from the words themselves, *viz.*

That God is an all-knowing God.

This may seem a principle, and therefore not to be doubted, and consequently needless to be proved. But he that has looked into controversy, and especially those two, which are now the most considerable, the *Arminian* and *Socinian*, will find that their grand fallacy, their *πρωτον ψευδος*, is founded upon their erroneous stinting of God's knowledge; but the first of these especially, who affirm, that God's knowledge, in respect of contingent futures, is only conditional, that is, God does not absolutely foreknow that such things will come to pass; but upon supposal that such and such causes meet with such and such circumstances, then he knows such things will follow: but now, if God does not absolutely and certainly *know* every contingent future, it follows, that he does not absolutely *will* and *decree* it; for whatsoever he wills he also knows; and if God does not *will* the future existence of it, whence comes it to exist? Certainly not from God but from itself; for if God hereafter vouchsafes a productive influence to the

actual producing of a thing contingent, which we now suppose future, (which God must do, or cease to be the first cause of all things:) I say, if God vouchsafes his power to give it existence, it follows, that he *wills* the production and existence of it *at that time*; for God wills a thing before he does it: and it also follows, that if he *wills* it at that time, he always *willed* and *decreed* it before; for to affirm that God wills the existence of a thing contingent, *then in the producing* of it, which *before*, while it *was yet future*, he did not will or decree; this is to make a new act of *willing*, which is an immanent act, and therefore not distinct from God to begin in time; that is, to make something that is the same with God, to be in God *now*, which was not in him before: which is hugely absurd, if not blasphemous. Thus we see the denial of God's absolute certain foreknowledge of all things, makes the existence of many of them entirely independent upon God, and totally from themselves; which is indeed to make him an idle epicurean God, and to deify them. And herein lies the abomination of asserting God's knowledge in respect of any thing conditional. As for the next opinion, *Socinus* endeavouring to assert the freedom of man's will in the highest, and observing that God's absolute certain foreknowledge did lay an antecedent necessity upon all men's actions as to their event, he makes short and thorough work, and utterly de.ies

denies his prescience. *Animadvertendum est infallibitem istam Dei prænotionem, quam pro re concessâ adversarii sumunt à nobis non admitti*, Socin. *prælect.* cap. viii. And that he might not seem to blaspheme without some reason, he says, as God, tho' he is omnipotent, cannot yet do those things that imply a contradiction; so, tho' he is omniscient, he cannot know things, the knowledge of which implies the same absurdity; which, he says, will follow in asserting that God has a certain infallible knowledge of those things, which in themselves are uncertain and contingent. And thus we see, that altho' God's omniscience be indeed a principle, and therefore ought to be granted; yet since it is thus controverted and denied, it is no less needful to be proved.

In the prosecution of this, I shall,

- I. Prove the *proposition*, and that both by scripture and reason.
- II. I shall shew the excellency of this knowledge of God, beyond the knowledge of men or angels.
- III. From the consideration of that excellency, I shall deduce something by way of inference and application.

I. And first for the proof of it, and that from scripture, in *John* xxi. 17. *Peter* says to *Christ*, *Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that*

that I love thee. Divines do here generally acknowledge, that in these words *Peter* makes a confession of the deity of Christ, which could not be inferred, unless there was a necessary connexion between the divine nature and the power of knowing all things; for in this consists the strength of *Peter's* argument, proving Christ to be God; in this he ascribes a property to him that agrees only to God; as Christ elsewhere proves himself to be really a man, by assuming those properties to himself which are inseparably inherent in man's nature. Another scripture proving the same truth, is that of *Heb. iv. 13.* *All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;* that is, (by a metaphor) to his understanding, which, by reason of the quickness and spirituality of this sense, is often expressed by an eye, and knowing by seeing: So that the words import thus much, that God most clearly discerns and knows all things and actions, as the eye manifestly beholds those objects that are fully presented to its view. There are many other places in scripture that richly hold forth God's omniscience, but in a point so evident these two may suffice.

Our second proof is from reason; and here our first argument shall be drawn from his works of creation and providence. It is impossible that he that made all things should not also know all things. Who is it that cannot readily acknowledge and read his own hand?

hand? What artificer is there that does not presently know and distinguish his own work? In all rational agents, before every action there is presupposed a knowledge of the thing that is to be produced by that action. So that if we grant (as I suppose none denies) that God is the maker of all things, that every creature dropped into the world through his hands, we cannot be so absurd as to deny him a distinct knowledge of those things, which with his own finger he made and fashioned. Next, his providence sufficiently declares his omniscience; if he manages, rules, and governs all things, yea sin itself, sometimes by permitting, sometimes by limiting or preventing, other times by punishing it, it clearly follows, that he has full cognizance of those things, since all these acts pre-suppose knowledge.

Now, from the consideration of this attribute, since it is our duty to be like our heavenly father, let us endeavour also to resemble him in knowledge. As it is the perfection of God to know all things, so it is the excellency of man to know any thing aright. Ignorance, it is the dishonour of our nature; and he that continues in it, what does he but erect a certain kingdom of darkness in his soul! But of all knowledge, that is the most excellent, upon which depends our eternal interest: I mean, our knowledge of God in Christ. In comparison of which, God gives

gives a very slight character of all things besides. What more desirable in the eyes of the world than riches? What more excellent than strength, more to be admired than wisdom? Yet what says God of all these, *Jer. ix. 23, 24. Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, that exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.* So that this is a knowledge that does not only surpass strength and riches, before which the very heathens could prefer their poor knowledge of nature. But it is such a knowledge, in comparison of which the very wisdom of men is folly. Consider also, that this is the sure way to everlasting life; so sure, that in scripture it is called everlasting life itself, in *John xvii. 3. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* Observe likewise, as this knowledge is called eternal life, so, on the contrary, the spirit of God calls ignorance eternal death, *John iii. 19. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.* Now if there can be any greater argument to a rational soul, to pursue after this knowledge, than the obtaining eternal life, let that soul neglect it; and, on the other

other hand, if there can be any stronger motive to woe a man out of his ignorance, than avoiding damnation, let him hug his ignorance as a desirable thing: let him embrace a cloud, and refresh himself under the shadow of death. But consider this, you that are ignorant of God, ignorant in the midst of teaching ordinances. O how dreadful is it, to enjoy precious means of knowledge, and only to be proficient in ignorance. As long as thou art destitute of this spiritual light and knowledge, thou art to the devil as *Sampson* to the *Philistines* without his eyes, thou must go whither he will lead thee, grind in his mill, and undergo all the slavish drudgery of sin, that a malicious devil, that hates thy soul, can put thee to. But, on the other side, knowledge, as it makes thee in a true sense a man, so this saving knowledge of God makes thee more than a man, that is, a christian. And remember, as the preposterous desire of knowledge was the first cause of man's unhappy fall, so the pursuit of this spiritual knowledge must be the first occasion of his recovery.

Thus far the arguments by which we prove God's omniscience; pass we now to the second thing, which is to shew the excellency of God's knowledge, above the knowledge either of men or angels.

And this appears, 1st, From the properties of this knowledge: 2^{dly}, From the object.

1st, Concerning its properties: The first property holding forth the excellency of this knowledge, is the exceeding evidence, and consequently the certainty of it; for tho' a thing may be certain, and yet not evident, yet whatsoever is evident, that also is certain. Evidence brings a property emanent from the essence and being of knowledge; it follows, that that which includes the nature of knowledge in an infinite manner, must be also attended by a most infinitely clear evidence. He that causes that innate evidence in every object, by which it moves and strikes the faculty, shall not he see? He that gives light to the eye, by which that evidence is discerned, shall not he discern? The great *intellectus agens*, that by shining upon our understandings causes us to understand, shall not he himself understand much more clearly? *John i. 9.* it is said of Christ, in respect of his deity, *that he is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* It is elsewhere said of God, *that he is the father of lights.* Indeed, the knowledge of man, upon the greatest improvements, retains a great mixture of ignorance, and all his labour, all the travel of his soul, in the pursuit of science, is not able thoroughly to work out that darkness of mind which he brought with him into the world: but now God is not only light, but such a light as with him there is no darkness at all. And thus it is clear, that the best of human knowledge is not able to
con-

contest with the divine. But yet may not the angels, those sons of light and knowledge, those near resemblances of their creator, may not they at least vie with the Divine Knowledge? Why, No. For even the angels stoop down and pry into the mysteries of God, and particularly that of the incarnation, as it is in *1 Pet. i. 12*. Therefore they do not fully and evidentially know them, for these are the postures, not of those that know already, but of those that endeavour to know. But now God must needs know this great mystery, for he contrived it. In *Job iv. 18*. he is said to charge his angels with folly. Certainly then he must have a transcendently perfect wisdom, far excelling theirs. From hence, therefore, we see, that the knowledge of God, even as to its clearness and pregnant evidence, is unconceivably beyond the knowledge of men or angels.

2dly, Another property of this knowledge, shewing the excellence of it, is this, that it is a knowledge independent upon the existence of the object or thing known. Man indeed receives nothing into his understanding but through his senses; and sense has nothing but what it fetches from the object. Take away sounds, and there will be no hearing; deprive us of light, and there will be no seeing. But now God beholds all things in himself; and that both *eminently*, as he sees his own perfection, which *eminently* includes all

the perfection that is scattered among the creatures, as the light of all the stars is contained eminently in the sun; and he beholds them also formally, distinctly, and according to the model of their own proper beings, without looking upon the existence of the things themselves, and that two ways:

1st, By reflecting upon his power, and what he can do; he has a perfect knowledge of all possibilities, and of things that may be produced.

2^{dly}, By reflecting upon his power and his will, he knows whatsoever shall be actually produced. For upon the concurrence of God's will with his power, there is nothing else requisite, but the thing does immediately result. This is the constitutive knowledge which gives being to the thing known; in which sense it may be truly said, that God does not therefore know things because they are or may be, but they therefore are or may be because he knows them. So that this our maxim, *Non entis nulla est scientia*, is true only of finite knowledge. For God's knowledge is antecedent to the object, quite different from ours, which is borrowed from it, and so subsequent to it. As the knowledge that a builder has of an house depends not upon the actual being of it; but he knows it partly by reflecting on his skill, in which he sees a perfect idea of it before ever it is made; and partly on his power, by which he is able to make it: but
now

now others knowledge depends upon the actual being of the house, as flowing from those representations they have of it after it is built. And such is our knowledge in respect of God's.

2dly, The excellency of God's knowledge appears in respect of his objects; which are all things knowable.

But they may be reduced to three things especially, which God alone perfectly knows, and are not to be known by men or angels.

1st, The nature of God himself. Nothing but an infinite knowledge can comprehend an infinite being. We may as well endeavour to take up the ocean in the hollow of our hands, or to clasp the heavens in our arms, as to understand or fathom the immense perfections of the Divine Nature.

2dly, The second sort of things only known to God are things future, and these are only within his reach. As for us, setting aside what we know by history, which is not so properly knowledge as belief, we know only what is present; for altho' we know some things that are passed also, yet we first know them as they were present; and the reason is, because we know things by our co-existence with them. Now God, by reason of the infinite compass of his being, running through all the distinctions of time, by an intimate co-existence with them, and consequently

with all things that do exist in those several and successive parcels of time, he takes a full survey of things, both past, present, and to come; which, tho' it be an undenied principle both in christian and natural theology, and consequently to be rather granted as a self-evident truth, than disputed as a problem, yet he who shall look into the writings of the *Pelagians*, *Jesuits*, or their *Dutch* brood, the *Remonstrants*, will find that their grand fallacy, their *πρώτον ψεύδος*, is founded upon their erroneous stating of the divine knowledge; by which they affirm, that God's knowledge, in respect of future contingents, is wholly conditional. For, as by one simple act of his being he does co-exist with all successive durations, so, by one act of his understanding, he does also know them. To help our apprehensions in this thing, we may take this similitude: A man walking in a path sees not that part of the way that is behind him, neither that which is any great distance before him, but successively comes to see it, as by degrees he arrives to, and co-exists with it: but now he that is upon an high mountain or tower, by one single cast of his eye, takes a view of the whole path, and at once sees the man, and what is behind him, and what so remote before him. Just so man, who exists in some part of time, neither properly knows those things that were before he was, nor those things that are future, but as he gains a suc-

successive co-existence with them. But God being (as I may say) exalted upon his own essence, does from thence, as from an high and lofty place, by one single act of his understanding, take a survey of us that are in the world, and those things that are past, and behind us, together with those that are before us, and yet to come.

Now, things future are of two sorts :

1st, Such as depend upon necessary causes, that is, those that constantly and in the same manner produce their effects : such are the sun and moon, in respect of the eclipses ; and the heavens, in respect of many things here below. So that their effects, tho' future, may be yet known in the causes. For we can foretel an eclipse many years before ; and while it is yet winter, we know that within such a period of days it will be summer. Now, in respect even of these future things, the knowledge of God, and of the creature, is very different : God, indeed, certainly knows when they will come to pass. Men and angels, indeed, have also a certain knowledge of them ; but it is not absolute, but only suppositional ; that is, upon supposal that such and such things continue in their being, and that God withal affords them his ordinary concurrence, such and such effects will certainly follow. But the causes themselves may perish ; and God, that created nature, may, by the same power and sovereignty, interrupt it in its course ; as he did the sun,

in the time of *Joshua*, Josh. x. 13. and the operation of that fire upon the three children. Now, in this case, neither men nor angels can certainly know or determine of such futures.

2dly, The second sort of things future, are things in their nature occasional, and contingent; such as come by chance, and such as depend upon the free-will of man; which is various in its working, and consequently, that which is produced by it, must needs be uncertain in the event. Now, it is the prerogative of God alone to have a steady foreknowledge of such things; no created being can dive into them: that man cannot, as reason would sufficiently prove, so scripture also does no less clearly demonstrate. *Isa. xlvii.*

II. God speaks to *Babylon*; *Evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt not know from whence it ariseth: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know: hereupon, in the two next verses, he defies them to find them out with all their sorceries and incantments: in the twelfth verse, Let now the astrologers and prognosticators stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.* If any man could foresee future events, then certainly it would be those who made it their business, and their profession; those who had not only their own understanding, but all the light of heaven to direct them. A man may as easily draw the perfect picture of

of a man, yet unborn, as have in his mind the idea of a contingent future.

Who knows what a day may bring forth : God has put obscurity between us and the nearest futures : there is night between us and the very next day. To the proofs drawn from scripture, we may add the overplus of our own experience. And that angels are also to seek in the certain knowledge of these things, is no less true. Had those fallen angels, before their sin, foreseen what would have followed it, we cannot but in reason imagine, that the foresight of their fall would have kept them from their sin. Hereupon the devil, in the heathen oracles, when he was consulted about future events, gave always doubtful, ambiguous answers ; so that, howsoever the thing fell out, he had still a salvo, or evasion, in the ambiguity of the expression. 'Tis confess'd, that sometimes his predictions have been answered by the event of the thing ; but then this was rather from the happiness of his conjecture, than the certainty of his knowledge. And, as one says,
' Angels have the advantage of us in respect
' of their experience, which is far greater in
' them than in us, both because they have
' been of longer duration and continuance in
' the world, and also because of the piercing
' quickness of their understandings, in com-
' paring one thing with another ; and from
' thence making conjectures at other things.'

Now,

Now, experience is a reiterated or repeated knowledge of things past; from whence arises an ability of judging or guessing at things future. And thus far angels can go, and no further. As for that argument, by which some would prove that angels know things future, because distance of time, and distance of place, are equally accidental differences; and we know, distance of place does not impede the knowledge of angels; therefore they may know things, notwithstanding the difference of time, that they are future. I say, this argument proves nothing, because the case is not the same, in respect of difference of place and of time. Distance of place always supposes the existence of the things that so differ: futurity, which is a difference of time, puts a non-existence of the thing; for that which is future, is not yet in being. And, since all created knowledge follows the existence of the thing known, there can be no knowledge of that which does not exist, but of that which either exists, or is supposed and looked upon as existing. But now, God knows contingent futures, yea, and that certainly and infallibly; and the reason is, because the most contingent being, when, and while it actually exists, is, in its being, necessary: *Omne quod est, quando est, necessario est*. But all things are present to God; they are look'd upon by him as under an actual existence; from whence we may collect

collect, that he has a certain and necessary knowledge of them.

3dly, The third sort of things, known only to God, are the thoughts of men : it belongs to the sovereignty of God's omniscience alone to judge and know these : *Psalm ii. 39. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.* This is attributed to God, by way of eminence ; and every such thing is not only *proper*, but also *peculiar* to him ; so as to be communicated to nothing else : for that cannot be ascribed to God, by way of distinction, which is also common to the creature. Angels, indeed, do exactly know our constitutions, and so can read the general inclination of our thoughts in them, but not the particular determination of them, *quoad hic & nunc*, in respect of particular objects and circumstances ; and also, when the thoughts move and stir the passions, and the passions work some change on the body : for, as natural philosophy teaches every passion, (which is a motion of the sensitive appetite,) *sit cum aliquâ mutatione corporis non naturali.* I say, in this respect, the angels may know the thoughts, as they betray themselves in some outward corporeal sign ; but, by any immediate inspection of the thoughts themselves, so they are not able to discern them. It is a privilege that God has given to our nature, to be able to conceal our thoughts ; next to that by which we are able to communicate them : *Jerem. xvii. 9. The heart*

heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it? None can read the thoughts, none can behold the intentions and desires, but that God, who vouchsafes an influence to the production of every thought, and every desire: 1 Cor. ii. 11. *Who knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man, that is within him?* It is well known, that these interrogations imply strong denials: Who can know the things of man? that is, none can know them: they are not subject to the inspection of any being, but God. For, notwithstanding this universal negation, we must of necessity except him, because the scripture elsewhere makes a peculiar exception of God, even there, where it affirms, that the heart cannot be known, *Jerem. x. 17. I, the Lord, search the heart; I try the reins.* From hence therefore appears the transcendent excellency of God's knowledge, beyond all created, that it is able to pierce into men's thoughts.

I proceed to make some *Application*; and to see what uses may be deduced from the consideration of God's omniscience: it may serve as an argument to press several duties upon us.

1st, It must be a strong motive to bring us to a free confession of all our sins to God. God's omniscience, or infinite knowledge, should indeed make us ashamed to commit sin; but it should embolden us to confess it.

We

We can commit, and tell our secrets to a friend that does not know them; how much more should we do it to him that knows them already. God's knowledge outruns our confessions, and anticipates what we have to say. As our Saviour speaks concerning prayer, *Your heavenly father knows what you have need of, before you ask*, Matth. vi. 8. So I may say of confession, your heavenly Father knows what secret sins you have committed, before you confess. But still he commands this duty of us; and that not to know our sins, but to see our ingenuity. *Adam*, when he hid himself, to the impiety of his sin, added the absurdity of a concealment. Our declaring of our sins to God, who knows them, without being beholden to our relation; it is like opening a window to receive the light, which would shine in through it howsoever. Every man has, *fenestratum pectus*, a casement in his bosom, through which God looks in upon him every day. When a master sees his servant commit a fault in secret, and thereupon urges him to a confession, he does it not so much to know the fault, as to try the man. Now there is no duty by which we give God the glory of his omniscience so much as by a free confession of our secret iniquities. *Joshua* vii. 19. *Joshua* says to *Achan*, *My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him*. Here, we see, had he not confessed his theft, he had been guilty

guilty of a greater, to wit, the robbing God of his glory. Thus the widow of Tekoah, by confessing her design and project to *David*, gave him the glory of his wisdom and knowledge. Hereupon, having confessed it, she says, in 2 Sam. xiv. 20. *My lord the king is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are done in the earth.* God seems to compound with us, and, in lieu of satisfaction, only to require our confession; *Jerem. xii. 13. I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep anger for ever; only acknowledge thy iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.* Nay, God commands us to confess our sins, not so much that he may know them, as that we may know them ourselves. For, while sin sits close in the heart, we cannot see it till we cast it forth by confession; as a man cannot see the corruption that is in his stomach, till he spits it out. But howsoever, the impossibility of concealing our sins from God's omniscience, is the great reason why we should confess them; for, as we cannot rescue them from his justice, so neither can we hide them from his knowledge. God's omniscience, together with his justice, represents him to a secret sinner, like a flaming fire; which by its heat consumes, and by its light discovers. Wherefore, to confess our sins, since we are not able to conceal them, what is it, but in a spiritual sense to make a virtue of necessity.

2dly,

2dly, The consideration of God's omniscience may enforce us to an humble submission to all God's commands and directions, and that both in respect of belief and of practice.

1st, And first, concerning things to be believed: There is such a depth in these, and such a seeming contradiction to reason, that our natural understandings are apt to quarrel, and find absurdities in them, and to dispute against that which we cannot comprehend. Hence, in *Ephes. iii. 19.* the apostle prays, that we may *know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge.* Here we should captivate the vain reasonings of our blind understandings, and answer the defect of our knowledge, by the infiniteness of God's; who knows a reason of whatsoever he commands, and of whatsoever we ought to believe. When we hear the mystery of the Trinity, that three subsistencies are contracted into one essence, and one essence enlarged into three subsistencies; when we hear of two natures conjoined in the same person, the Creator and the creature, united in Jesus Christ; our reason is nonplus'd and amazed, and cannot satisfy itself from any of its own principles. When we hear of the resurrection, that after our bodies are destroyed, and by continual transmutation brought to be clean another thing; then for the same numerical bodies to be restored, and all the scattered parts to be renewed

renewed, and return to their proper places; so that with *Job*, we should be enabled to see our Redeemer, *with these very eyes, and no other*, *Job* xix. 26, 27. When we hear of the mysterious hidden works of the spirit in our regeneration, and the begetting of new principles within us, so as to change and alter our nature; that he, which by his constitution is intemperate, and furious, should be made temperate and meek; that he, which by his education is profane and worldly, should, by the secret forcible operation of the spirit, become holy and spiritually-minded. I say, this startles and confounds us; and we are apt to say with *Nicodemus*, *How can these things be?* We cannot, from any topick of reason or philosophy, give a rational account of them. But here we should know, that although these things are not intelligible by men, yet they are to the all-knowing God. And although our reason cannot discern or comprehend these things, yet God is greater than our reason, and knoweth all things.

2dly, The consideration of God's infinite knowledge ought to make us comply with God's commands in things concerning our practice, and that even in those duties, that to our natural judgments may seem unreasonable. He that renounces the dictates of his own carnal wisdom, and prosecutes the ways prescribed to him by God, has set to his seal, that God is wise and infinitely more knowing than himself.

himself. For all our disobedience, our relinquishing the ways of God, and adhering to our own, may be resolved into this; that men think they know a nearer way to happiness, than God has prescribed them; which, how derogatory it is to the all-knowing wisdom of God, let our own reason be judge. Why do we follow the advice of our physicians and lawyers, but from the opinion we have of their knowledge and experience, *Absalom*, by not doing according to *Ahitopbel's* counsel, did in that clearly undervalue his wisdom; and the discredit of that made *Ahitopbel* hang himself. Now the most wise and omniscient God, that knows the utmost of sin, that knows what it is for a sinner to be saved, and to escape the stroke of his justice, does, in order thereto, command us to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, to renounce our dearest pleasures, our nearest relations, as they stand in competition with Christ; yea, to prefer the most unpleasant duty, before the most pleasing sin. Here flesh and blood is at a stand; and, as it cannot endure the strictness and rigour, so neither can it see the reason of these commands. But what *Elijah* said to *Israel* in the case of *Baal*, that I may here apply, *Why balt we between two opinions?* If God, who has commanded and enjoined these duties, be the all-knowing God, why do we not then, without any further delay, perform them? If he be not;

why do we then give him divine worship? Wherefore I shall conclude with this most certain truth : There is no such way of giving God the glory of his infinite knowledge, as by an obediential practice of those duties *and commands* which seem most to thwart and contradict our own.

3dly, and lastly, Since it is an express command of our Saviour himself, that *we should be perfect; as our heavenly father is perfect*; why should we not, according to our weak model, endeavour to copy out this divine perfection upon our soul, as well as any of the rest? And why, as well as we are commanded to be like him in his goodness, bounty, and mercy, we should not endeavour to resemble him in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, according to our weak capacity? For this is not to say as lucifer, *I will ascend, and be like the Most-high*; nor to follow what he suggested to our first parents, *Ye shall be like Gods* : for, had they affected to be like God in knowledge, as they ought to have done, they would have certainly discerned the cheat of the serpent, and the trials which the devil was then putting upon them. No; it is no arrogance for us to endeavour to be like God, in passing a right and true judgment upon all things that concern us; in judging of holiness; and as God judges; in judging of sin as God judges of every thing relating to our temporal or eternal happiness or misery. God (says the

the apostle) *is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.* We do not disparage nor rival the great fountain of light, the sun, by endeavouring to have as much of his light in our houses as we can. We have our rule and measure to proceed by, in our imitation of our heavenly father, in this respect, as well as in any other : for, as it is the perfection of God to know all things, so it is the excellency of man to know any thing aright.

To God therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now, and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N XII.

JONAH iii. 8, 9.

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not.

THE business of the day is not unknown to you; we are called by publick authority to the work of humiliation; and the cause and occasion of this work you are acquainted with, to wit, the deplorable eruption of a sad distemper, in sundry parts of the nation; and the cause of this we are
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to know is sin. There is no calamity, but, if we track it to its original, we shall find it issue from sin. They are the distempers of the soul that cause the distempers of the body; therefore, if we would recover our bodily health, we must begin the cure at the soul. Fasting and humiliation is a sovereign remedy to evacuate all spiritual distempers; and what is true in physick of the body, *tertia pars morborum sanatur jejunie*, that the third part of diseases is cured by fasting, is much more true in divinity, in respect of the soul; that not only some, but all its diseases, are removed, or at least weakened and diminished by a spiritual fasting.

In this chapter we have the example of a fast celebrated by heathens, but worthy of the imitation of the best christians; and if we do not fast and humble ourselves, now a judgment is actually lying upon us from God, certainly the men of *Nineveh* will rise up in judgment against this generation, and condemn it; for they fasted and humbled themselves upon the very approach of a judgment.

Here are several things considerable:

1st, *Jonah's* denunciation of a judgment of God impendent upon them.

2^{dly}, Their humiliation upon the hearing of this judgment; in which fast or humiliation there is considerable.

I. The manner of it, which consists in two things:

1st, The external humiliation of the body.

2^{dly}, An internal spiritual separation from sin.

II. The universal extent of it, *let man and beast, &c.* and withal the particular application of it, *verse 8. let them turn every one from, &c.*

III. The ground or motive of this humiliation; which was hope of mercy, and a pardon upon the exercise of this duty.

The words will afford several observations.

1st, The consideration of a judgment approaching unto, or actually lying upon a people, is a sufficient argument for fasting and humiliation. *Ver. 4, 5.*

2^{dly}, That an afflicting of the body is a good preparative to the humiliation of the soul. *Ver. 6, 7.*

3^{dly}, That the nature of a fast more especially consists in a real, sincere separation from sin. *Ver. 8.*

4^{thly}, That national sins do deserve national humiliation. *Ver. 5.*

5^{thly}, The best and most effectual way to remove a national judgment, is for every particular man to enquire into, and to amend his own personal particular sins. *Ver. 8.*

6^{thly},

6thly, Upon a serious humiliation for, and forsaking of our sins, there is sufficient argument in God's mercy to hope for a removal of the severest judgment. *Ver. 9.*

I chiefly intend the discussing the five observations; but I shall speak something to them all.

1st Obs. Concerning the first: That the consideration of a judgment, &c. Extraordinary cases call for extraordinary services. Every judgment overspreading a nation is an extraordinary judgment; and fasting bears some proportion to it, as being an extraordinary duty. When God shall shake his sword over a nation, and the inhabitants take no notice of it; when he shall begin to take hold of judgment, and the people not take hold of his mercy in prayer and repentance; these are sad symptoms of a decaying, if not perishing state. When the son sees his father about to whip him, and has already laid hold of the rod, will he not fall down upon his knees and ask him pardon? Now we ought to humble ourselves under a judgment upon several accounts.

1st, Because in every judgment God calls for humiliation; they are the alarums of the Almighty, by which he terrifies and awakens sleepy souls. We read of the *voice of God's rod*, *Micah vi. 9.* and the rod of God in every judgment speaks this; either that we should begin or renew our repentance. For a people to hear the dreadful voice of a displeased God in a

judgment, and yet not to be wrought upon to proceed to a speedy humiliation; 'tis like *Samuel's* hearing the Lord speaking to him when he was a child, in the midst of his sleep, the voice comes, and awakes him, he hears it, yet takes little notice of it, but presently returns to sleep again. If we can so pass over the voice of God in a judgment, as presently to return to our former sleep and security, it is an act of high contempt and disobedience.

The proudest of the heathens, and the greatest contemners of a Deity, yet would be amazed, and endeavour to hide themselves when they heard it thunder. Could the voice of the cloud make them shrink and tremble, and shall not the voice of a national judgment make us mourn and repent! God calls for mourning and lamentation, his voice is plain and loud, and woe be to us if we do not hear it.

2dly, We ought to humble ourselves under every judgment, because it deserves our humiliation: tho' this be an unpleasing duty to the flesh, yet it is abundantly countervailed by the greatness of the trouble it does remove. Not only christianity, but nature bids us mourn under an affliction. To what do we reserve our sorrows, if we do not spend them upon this occasion. *Lament. iii. 48. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.* The prophet found no such time for weeping as the time
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of publick calamity. Then did *Hezekiah* mourn and humble himself, when there was a devouring army of the *Assyrians* approaching. If the securing of your health, your lives, your temporal, your spiritual estates, does not merit the deepest of our humiliations, our strongest wrestlings with God in fasting and prayer, then keep these duties for something that may better deserve them.

2d Obs. That the affliction of the body is a good preparative to the humiliation of the soul; thus we see in the *2d* of *Joel*, where there was a solemn fast proclaimed, and directions given for the keeping of it, it is said, in the *16th* verse, *Let the bridegroom go out of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.* Bodily and sensual enjoyments must be laid aside; and that which is prescribed to us for the right celebration of the sabbath, *that a man should not find his own pleasure*, in *Isa. lviii. 3.* is upon the same account requisite to a due performance of this duty. Sensual delights are not consistent with spiritual services.

Now the reasons that the affliction of the body is so good a preparative to the humiliation of the soul, are,

1st, Because the operations of the soul do much follow the disposition and temper of the body. There is a near connexion and a sympathy between these two. There can scarce be grief and pleasure in one, but the
other

other partakes. Pleasure! it melts the soul through the body, as lightning does the sword through the scabbard. Can the body be pampered, and the soul not grow wanton? Can the carnal objects of sense be received, without leaving a tincture upon the mind? When the body is filled and feasted, the soul is not in so fit a posture to hunger and thirst after righteousness. *Herod*, after his feast, is fit to behead, but not to hear *John Baptist*.

2dly, The afflicting of the body, it curbs the flesh, and makes it serviceable to the spirit. The flesh is unruly, and repugnant to the yoke of a spiritual service; it has a natural averseness to them, and as long as it is indulged, the opposition is so much the stronger: wherefore, if we would keep our hearts close to so heavenly a duty, we must sequester them from the incentives of carnal objects. *I keep under my body*, says *St. Paul*. In all these engagements the spirit must keep under the body, or the body will be above the spirit. The body is and ought to be the soul's instrument in the execution of all duties; but if it be not rightly fixed and disposed, it may recoil upon the soul, and hurt it: as a hatchet, if not rightly ordered, may fly off, and mischief him that uses it. O let us therefore lay aside all flesh-pleasing vanities; let us abandon those delights that incumber the soul, that clip its wings, and hinders its aspiring to heaven. It will be part of our hap-

happiness and perfection hereafter to have spiritual bodies, let us endeavour to make them so now: *Canst thou not watch with me an hour?* says Christ: *Canst not thou fast with me a day?* It is our duty to deny ourselves in these outward refreshments, so far as it may quicken and enable us to a more nimble performance of so severe a duty. Let us follow the example of the *Ninevites* in the text; *Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth.* Let our brutish part, our body, as well as our manly part, our soul, be brought under the spiritual yoke of humiliation. But it may be here said,

(*Objection.*) Is not this contrary to what our Saviour prescribes in the gospel, who in express terms forbids us this afflicting of the body, in our fastings, *Matth. vi. 16, 17, 18.* *When ye fast, be not as hypocrites, of a sad countenance, &c.* Now, how can this scripture consist with the truth of this doctrine, that the affliction of the body tends to advance the devotion and humiliation of the soul?

In answer to this, we may observe;

1st, That Christ does not absolutely forbid them to be of a sad countenance, but with this qualification; *Be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.* There is a difference between a religious and an affected sadness; between a due composure, and a dissembling of the countenance: one is spiritual duty, the other

other is spiritual pride ; one adorns, the other destroys humiliation. And those that do in this manner, and for this end, disfigure their faces, that they may appear to fast, they make themselves more deformed in the eyes of God, than in the eyes of men.

2dly, Christ does not forbid such a sadness of countenance as was the natural effect of an inward sorrow. For, as it is said, *Mine eye affecteth mine heart*, Lamen. iii. 51. so the heart will affect the eye ; spiritual sorrow will break out into the countenance. But the *Pharisees* had a peculiar way among themselves, of making and deforming their faces, in their days of fasting ; in which they placed the chief part of the duty, (as the papists do in whipping themselves ;) and it was against this abuse that Christ cautioned his disciples. For when he bids them, on the contrary, anoint their head, and wash their feet, it was not meant of ornament, but of a decent dressing of themselves, according to the custom of those places. So that he does not here oppose jollity and looseness to a due and serious sadness, so as to command that in the room of this ; but he does oppose a prudent decency to an absurd superstition. And thus much in answer to this objection, and concerning the second observation.

3d Obs. I proceed now to the third ; viz. *that the nature of a fast especially consists in a real,*

real, sincere separation from sin. The truth of this will appear from these considerations:

1st, That fasting, it is a spiritual duty: the humbling of the body indeed is required, not so much as a part, as an instrument of this duty: 'tis separation from sin that God requires, and the soul must intend: 'tis thy heart, and not thy stomach, that God would have empty. 'Tis not thy outward mourning or complaining, not the presence of thy body in the church, not thy abstaining from bodily food, that makes a fast; for what does it avail thee to forbear thy meat, if thou dost feed upon thy sin? what does the sackcloth and the ashes, if thou art not cloathed with righteousness? God overlooks and rejects all these services, as a piece of a provoking mockery, if they are not attended with a sincere renouncing of thy sin. Thou mayst have a thin, pining body, and yet a luxurious soul: thou mayst hang the head, like a bulrush, and yet aspire in thy mind, like a lucifer. Let us not deceive ourselves, for God is not deceived. If our sin abides, after all our fasting, we shall return to it with a greater appetite. To leave our sin, and exercise the opposite duties of holiness, this is that which gives a relish and a favour to all our humiliations before God. In *Isaiab* lviii. 4, 5, 6. God roundly tells his people what was truly a fast, and what was no fast, in his esteem. — Not to abstain from

from bread, but to deal it to the hungry ; this is properly to fast : not to wrap thyself in sackcloth, but to cover and cloath thy naked brother ; this is to be humbled. Hence, in *Jerem. xxxvi. 6, 7.* we have the prophet presenting the children of *Israel*, upon their fasting days, with a catalogue of God's commands : this was their bill of fare upon such days.—— Take therefore a survey of the state of thy soul ; is there such a corruption in thy heart, remove it ; such a sin in thy hands, such a blot upon thy conscience, wash it out with the tears of a true repentance. He that only forbears his meat, and not his sin, the beasts of *Nineveh* kept as good a fast as he. 'Tis as unseemly to come to a fast with a foul heart, as to dinner with foul hands.

2dly, The nature of a fast chiefly consists in our separation from sin, because this is the proper end of it. As the end of eating is to strengthen the body, so the end of fasting is to strengthen the soul. For, as our Saviour speaks of some unclean spirits, *Matth. xvii. 21.* so it is true of some kind of sins, that they are not to be cast out but by fasting and prayer. This is the greatest means of mortification of sin, and that, which of all others carries it on most effectually ; it is that which lays the ax to the very root of our corruption. It is a duty that is marked out by God's institution, for this very purpose, *David*, that was most in this work of mortifying his sin,
that

that omitted the use of no means that might weaken his corruption; he gives us an account of what course he took, *Psalms cii. 4.* he tells us, *that he forgot to eat his bread*; and *Psalms cix. 24.* *that his knees were weak thro' fasting.* Now, all that he aimed at in this, was the getting the upper-hand of his corruption, that he might starve his sin. So that it follows, that if our fasting attain not the proper end for which God designed it, it falls short of its nature, and cannot properly be called a duty. True it is, that one end of a religious fast is to prevent or remove God's judgments; but how does it effect this? is it not by removing sin, that is the cause of those judgments? No humiliation ever took off an affliction, before it first took off the sin. Misery is the natural consequent of iniquity; and he that endeavours to rid himself of one, before he has freed himself of the other, would hinder the streams before he has stopp'd the fountain. Humiliation! it quenches the wrath of God, by removing the combustible matter of sin, upon which it preys. When this affords no fuel, God's anger ceases to burn. A plague, or a disease, sent from God, will scarce be able to hurt or infect that soul, which has cleansed and purged off all its ill humours, by a thorough humiliation. It is clear, therefore, that the removal of sin is the very essence of this duty, without which all other humbling ourselves is so far from being profitable, that
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it is abominable; *Joel ii. 13. Rend your hearts, and not your garments.* If the heart be not torn off from sin, to rend only the garment, it further provokes God, and (as I may so speak) makes the breach wider. To what purpose does the riotous drunkard strain himself to a fast, if he does not from this gain strength against his intemperance? To what end does the profane, the covetous, the neglecter of sabbaths, engage in this duty, unless he gathers spiritual strength, to walk more closely with God for the future? This we must know, that there is no religious duty, that attains its end, but when it weakens our sin.

And thus much of the third observation.

4th Obs. National sins deserve national humiliation: there must be some proportion between sin and sorrow. Humble repentance is to cure us of our sins and miseries; and there can be no cure wrought, unless the plaister be as broad as the sore. If a whole nation sins, a whole nation must also repent, or perish. If a whole world corrupts itself before God, it must either be humbled, or be drowned. The highest to the lowest have provoked God; there has been a joint concurrence in sin, therefore all must jointly concur in humiliation. When a distemper has seized the whole body, there must be a general change of the whole habit and frame of it, otherwise no sound recovery can be expected.

pested. The body of a nation should speak to God, as *Peter* did to *Christ*, when he washed his feet; *Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my head and my hands.* Let thy spirit enable, not only the vulgar sort, but the great ones, to abase themselves in tears and repentance. The spirit of humiliation should be like *Aaron's* precious ointment, running down from the head to the skirts and hem of his garment. This was the custom of the religious princes of *Judah*, when they were to deal with God about publick mercies; they knew their sins were general, and therefore that their humiliation was to be of the same extent, 2 *Chron.* xx. 3. 4. *And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord; and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah: and, Jerem.* xxxvi. 9. it is said of the princes of the people, *that they proclaimed a fast before the Lord, to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.* Now the reasons that there is such an universality required in our humiliations, may be,

1st, Because a general humiliation tends most to solve the breach of God's honour. A prince that has been offended by a general rebellion, cannot be appeased, but by a general submission. This is a lively acknowledgment of God's majesty; when a nation shall lie in the dust before him; when he shall be praised and adored in the great congregation:

by this we confess him the Lord of nations; and that he is able to destroy us, tho' we unite ourselves into multitudes; and that we need be humbled, and tremble at his power, as much as if we were but one single person.

2dly, Generality gives force and strength to humiliation. When an army of humble penitents besieges heaven, 'tis hard, if their prayers do not force their way through: *cre-*
didimus junctas fortius ire preces; many hands give dispatch to a difficult business. And humiliation is a very hard task, and justly requires many helping hands to be lift up together in prayer. General sins are strongest to bring down a judgment; therefore, general humiliation must needs be strongest to prevent it. I proceed to the

5th Obs. viz. That the best and most effectual way to avert a national judgment, is for every particular man to enquire into, and to amend his own personal particular sins.

I shall prove the truth of this assertion by several reasons:

1st, Because particular sins oftentimes fetch down general, universal judgments. Sin, like a leprosy, tho' it begin in a small compass, yet it quickly, in the effects of it, overspreads the whole. It may first appear like that cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, 1 Kings viii. 44. but it presently overclouds and darkens the heavens over us, and showers down the heaviest of God's judgments. Adam's sin was but the sin of one man, and yet how large and

extensive were the dimensions of the curse! it diffused itself to all his posterity, and that in all places, in all ages. When *David* numbered the people, none but *David* sinned; yet all *Israel* felt the smart of the punishment, thousands fell under the pestilence: the penalty of this sin was as large as his dominions; the curse, it reached from *Dan* to *Beersheba*. But here it may be replied, these, indeed, were publick persons, and their offences publick, and therefore the punishment might be so too. But then, what shall we think of *Achan*? he was no publick person, no governor, no representative of a people; yet we see his one particular trespass, in meddling with the cursed thing, caused the whole armies of *Israel* to fly before their enemies: that one sin chased a thousand, and put ten thousand to flight, *Joshua* vii. And again, did not the sin of a few profane *Benjamites* scatter and almost devour a whole tribe? *Judges* xx. From these examples we may make this natural conclusion to ourselves, that what God did then, if he please, he may do the same now.

The reasons that God sometimes, for particular sins, inflicts general judgments, may be these:

1st. To shew us the provoking nature of sin; and that we live upon the score of mercy, and not by any title that we claim to life from our own righteousness: 'tis a mercy that God does not destroy for the sins

of other men. Was it not a singular mercy to *Lot*, that he was delivered from the common destruction, tho' he never shared in the common sin? The righteousness of the whole world, since the fall, is not able to save one man; but the sin of one man, if God should deal according to the rigour of his justice, was enough to destroy a whole world.

2dly, God, deservedly, sometimes sends a general judgment for a particular sin; because, tho' the sin is particular, in respect of the subject and cause of it, yet it may be general, in respect of its contagion. The plague, tho' but in one man, yet 'tis able to derive a general infection over a whole city. Thy sin, tho' the commission of it abides upon thy particular person, yet thou dost not know how far the example of it may spread. *David's* murder and adultery, as to the personal guilt of it, went no further than himself; but we know the scandal of it was very infectious; it caused the enemies of God to blaspheme: God, therefore, may deservedly avenge particular sins with general judgments.

2dly, As some particular sins are the total cause of a general judgment, so all and every particular sin shares and contributes its part in the bringing down of a judgment upon a nation, tho' it be not always the only cause of that judgment: a universal sin is made up of many particulars: if there were no personal, there could be no national sin. We may

may look upon our own particular miscarriages as small things, and not discernible in so great a croud; we may think, that the sins of one man are no more considerable, in respect of the sins of a nation, than one man is in comparison of all the inhabitants of the nation: yet one man's sin, tho' in itself it should be weaker, yet, as 'tis joined with the sins of a multitude, it will do execution. One soldier, taken by himself, is of no considerable force; but, as joined to the body of an army, he will conquer and trample down towns and cities. One single drop of water, how contemptible is it! but as it is joined to the ocean, so 'tis terrible; it drowns, it destroys. Wherefore, let none flatter himself, and think that his sin has no share in the misery of the nation; for every particular man may think so, as well as one: and, if it should be true of every one, to whose sin should we ascribe the calamities we endure! *For the sin of the inhabitants, a land is said to mourn; a fruitful land to be made barren, for the wickedness of those that dwell therein.* And who knows, but mine and thy sins may have provoked God to visit the nation with this distemper? How dost thou know, but thy profaneness, thy drunkenness, may cause the land to mourn: thy slighting God's ordinances, and thy causeless absenting thyself from his worship, may cause God to appear against the nation in anger. When a barrel of gun-

powder is fired, does not one corn, as much as another, contribute to the blowing up of the house? Certainly, if the nation should receive some great blessing from God, upon the score of desert, would not every particular man be apt to thrust in, and ascribe some part of it to the merit of his own particular righteousness? How much more should we take shame and confusion to ourselves, and mark out our own personal sins, as those that have stuck deep in the nation's misery! As 'tis the duty of every particular soldier in the army, to fight in the day of battle, so 'tis equally the duty of every particular Christian, to mourn in a day of humiliation.

3d Reason. Because God takes special notice of particular sins: punishing of a multitude does not make God overlook particulars; but he takes a distinct view of each several man's transgression; as in our reading over a volume, the eye takes a distinct view of every letter. It is our prudence to take notice of those sins that God takes notice of; and, as it is our prudence to take notice of them, so it is our greater prudence to lament them. Hence we have God, in scripture, so often singling out some sinners; in particular, *Deut. xxix. 18.* God, speaking to the whole body of the *Israelites*, says, *Take heed, lest there be amongst you a root that beareth gall and bitterness.* One would think, that in so large a garden, one weed might escape his eye: but

but the eye of God, like the sun, as it enlightens the whole world, so it discovers every little atom. It is said, that God would search *Jerusalem* with candles; so exact is he in his survey of each several man's condition. In *Psalms* xiv. 2. *God looketh down from heaven, to see if there were any one, whose heart sought the Lord*: and in the third verse, he brings a particular report of their wickedness; *There is none that doth good, no, not one.* He speaks as if he had searched and considered them, one by one. Now, the consideration of this, that God takes a particular notice of our personal misdemeanors, should engage us to set about a particular amendment. When workmen know their master will come, and take a particular account of each man's several task, this is a sufficient argument to make them fearful to be negligent, and incite them to be accurate in their performance of it. God oftentimes, in a general judgment, has a more especial design upon some few particular sinners; as when *Joab* drew up a party of men to be slain by the *Ammonites*, his design was only directed to the death of *Uriah*. God, when he commissions his plagues to go over a nation, he gives them more especial charge to visit such and such a sinner. God sends a war and the sword abroad to such nation; but be sure, says he, take such a secure sinner, such a covetous person in your way: let his goods and his substance be rifled,

and made a spoil: I have observed, that his heart has been estranged from me, and wholly set upon the world. He bids a sickness go to such a people; but be sure, says he, forget not to take off such a backsliding, incorrigible sinner: he cumpers the ground, and I can bear with him no longer. To speak according to the manner of men, God does as really mark out and separate some sinners, more especially, to a general destruction, as *David* gave his captain a more especial command to preserve *Absalom*. This is a third reason, why men should, in their humiliations, descend to a particular removal of their personal sins, because God accurately considers them.

4th Reason. No humiliation can be well and sincere, unless it be personal and particular. 'Tis a saying, that there is, *dolus in universalibus*, deceit and courage in universals. In general acknowledgments, a man is apt to put a fallacy upon his soul, and to take that for repentance, which is no repentance. He that is truly humbled and repents, his voice must be, not *We have sinned*, but *I have sinned against the Lord*. *Nathan*, when he would force home a sound, real humiliation upon *David*, he makes his case particular, *Thou art the man*, 2 Sam. xii. 7. The only word that dropped from *Pharaoh*, that seemed to have something in it of true humiliation was that in *Exod.* ix. 27. *In this I have sinned*:

finned: the Lord is righteous, but I and my people are wicked. Now it is clear, that this is the only true way of humiliation, for this is the way and the method that the spirit of God takes in humbling the soul; it makes a personal particular application of all God's curses against finners to the soul. The word in general says, *Cursed be he that continues not in all these things that are written in the law, to observe and do them.* Here the spirit comes in, and with much power tells a soul, Thou art the man, thou art he that has broke God's commands, violated his laws, trampled upon all his precepts, and therefore thou art he that lyest under the dint of this heavy curse: God means thee; God speaks to thee in particular; therefore take it to thyself, and be humbled. Now the reason that a man's consideration of his particular sins is the means to produce a true and thorough humiliation is, because man is only humbled for those things in which he is concerned; and no man looks upon himself as concerned in a general evil, till he makes it particular by a personal application. When we hear of sickness abroad, we are not much moved; but when we find the symptoms of it upon our own bodies, then we speak more feelingly of it, and use the utmost care to remove it. The notions we have of sin, and misery, that follows sin, are but common and superficial, till we make them particular by our own experience. If we would kill our
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sins we must not shoot our sorrows at random, at sin in general, but single them out, and take a distinct aim at every sin in particular. Altho', to make the work of humiliation more easy, I should advise the soul to this way, because we may master and conquer these sins by our sorrows, that we take severally and apart, which we could not so well deal with in the heap. Those evils most affect our sorrows that most affect our apprehensions; but sins, as they are represented to us in particular, chiefly affect our apprehensions: generals and universals leave a confused, imperfect notion in the mind; but particulars leave a more clear and evident impression. Thus much of the fourth reason to prove this doctrine, that 'tis the best and most effectual way to avert a general judgment, for every particular man seriously to enquire into, and amend his personal particular sins.

6th Observation is, That upon our serious humiliation for, and forsaking of our sins, there is sufficient argument in God's mercy to hope for a removal of the severest judgment.

Now the truth of this will appear from these three things:

1st, Because God has promised, upon true humiliation, to remove his judgments.

2dly, Because he has often actually removed them upon such humiliation.

3dly, Because, when we are brought to be thus

thus humbled, God has attained the end of his judgments.

1st, There is argument for this hope, because God has promised it. Mercy, it is the only refuge of a lost creature, the only prop of a decaying confidence, 'tis God's endearing attribute. But, since we have sinned, God's justice keeps us from relying upon his mercy, till his promise gives us leave; this is that alone that opens a door of mercy to a forlorn soul, and makes that confidence become duty which would otherwise be presumption. In the 26th of *Leviticus*, the spirit of God reckons up many sad and dismal curses which should befall the children of *Israel* if they did apostatize from God, and break his commands. Yet in the 41st and 42^d verses, he promises them an after-return of mercy upon their humiliation.—So merciful is God, that he closeth his threatenings with prescriptions how to avoid them; and in the midst of judgment shews the way how to regain mercy. What God promised to *Israel* he does as truly promise to us; for his mercy, that caused him to make this promise, is the same yesterday and to-day. And, as the apostle observes, no promise is of private interpretation. In the forementioned *Jer. xxxvi. 3.* *It may be*, says God, *that the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity, and their sin.*

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Where God forgives the sin he always removes the judgment. Why do we not then engage our utmost in these duties? Is not God's promise true, that we should not believe it? and if it be true, and we do believe it, is it not worthy our closing with it, by fulfilling its conditions? We have cause enough to believe, that God is much more willing to remove than to bring judgments upon men. It is reason enough that we should humble ourselves under God's judgment, tho' he had made no such promise of mercy; even for this cause, that by our humiliations we might prevail with him to make us such a promise. But how much readier should we be in this duty, now the promise is prepared and presented to our hands? Surely if our miseries abide upon us, it is not because God is wanting to us, but we are wanting to ourselves.

2dly, There is argument for hope, because God has often removed judgments upon a sincere humiliation. And if we cannot command our faith to believe what God has promised to do, yet let us believe what God has done already. Every instance in this nature, 'tis an overplus of evidence to over-rule us into this perswasion. A promise with an instance, 'tis like an excellent medicine with a *probatum est*, ratified by experience. The first instance of those that have tasted mercy after humiliation is that in the text, the 10th verse,
And

And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not. God will let men see, that

he can more easily repent of his anger than they of their sins. The second instance, is that of *Manasses*; a prodigy of sin, one as it were raised up on purpose, in whom it might appear how far wickedness might proceed; yet we know, upon his humiliation, God turned his captivity, and set him loose from his chains, and from a prison, (a thing seldom known in any age;) he returned him to a kingdom, 2 *Chron.* xxxiii. 12, 13.—Now is there any man that can rationally doubt of the strength of humiliation, after it has restored a *Manasses*?

3^{dly}, The third instance is that of *Abab*, one almost as deep in sin as *Manasses*; one that sold himself to do wickedly; a king of *Israel*, yet a slave to sin; polluted with the blood of his innocent neighbour; yet when the curse of God met him, and shook him into an humiliation, 1 *Kings* xxi. 29. God's anger thereupon leaves him for a while, and tho' his justice could not let him take away the punishment, yet his mercy caused him to defer it. God's fury in this case (if I may so express it) something resembling an ague; it shook him for a while, and then it left him. All divines do agree, that *Abab's* humiliation was not sincere, but only hypocritical. Now if God were so merciful as to reward the bare outside of an humble repentance

tance with such an abatement of a judgment, will he not answer and reward thy hearty, sincere humiliation with an entire removal of it? In *Psalm* cvii. 17, 18, 19. *Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted; their souls abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death; then they cry unto the Lord in their troubles, he saveth them out of their distresses.* Here we have another kind of unsincere repentance, seconded with an undeserved reward. And can God so love the very picture of humiliation, and not love and embrace that much more? Can the bare shew of repentance delay God's stroke, and shall not the reality and truth of it avert it? Certainly this is the only reason that God shews himself so favourable to hypocrites bare pretences, that he may encourage our real endeavours.

3dly, There is argument to hope for the removal of a judgment upon true humiliation, because in this God attains the end of his judgments. No need of further purging when the humour is carried off. God's actions extend no further than his designs. God does not punish that he may punish, but that he may humble; wherefore, when humility is produced, his punishments proceed no further. God is of too great mercy to triumph over a prostrate soul. There is a resurrection from misery as well as from the grave. 'Tis true God is said to kill, 1 *Sam.* ii. 8. but in the

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next words 'tis added, that *he makes alive*. God does not punish as that he may thence receive satisfaction for our sins, for then as our sin is infinite so our punishments would be endless. All satisfaction is laid up in Christ, and when we are thoroughly humble for sin, that satisfaction is then actually made ours. No wonder, therefore, if God's judgments vanish before that satisfaction; if it removes a temporal judgment, that rescues from an eternal. This is certain and worth our observation, that God never sends a judgment upon any of his children, but it is for one of these two ends, either to prevent or remove sin. O, says God, here's a poor soul that is hugging and embracing its sin, pleasing itself in its own ruin; unless sin be imbittered to it by some severe affliction, it will never leave it, but perish in it. Here is another ready to sin, in a posture to close with any temptation, going on in the ready road to death. O, says God, here's another poor creature, that if some sharp judgment does not meet and stop it, it is posting on with a full career to its own perdition. Now God does effect both these works, to wit, the removal and the prevention of sin, by the instrumental help of a thorough humiliation. Consider therefore with thyself, thou that hast lain a long time under any cross or affliction from God, has thy affliction humbled thee? has it weakened thy sin, strengthened thy hands to duty? if it has not; thou hast cause to fear that God will

will either continue that judgment that now presses thee, or bring a greater and a sorer evil upon thee. But, on the other hand, if thy affliction has wrought kindly, if it had cleansed off the filth and corruption of thy heart, if it had brought thee to disesteem the world, and value Christ, to look upon sin as a greater evil than death, believe it, God has done his work upon thee, and he will quickly remove either the judgment itself, or the venom and sting of it. Now the showers of repentance are fallen, the clouds of God's wrath are vanishing: and he is coming forth to meet thee as a poor returning prodigal. He looks upon thee as he did once upon Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, &c. therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* If thou hast an heart to mourn over thy sin, God has bowels of compassion to yearn and relent over thee. If thou canst in sincerity say, I will sin no more, God is as ready to say, that he will afflict no more. Believe it, if thou hast a purpose to return to God, God has mercy to return to thee.

To which God, therefore, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

F I N I S.

